



*Photo by Plat*

Church and Street Market, Lublin

# THE POLISH TRADITION

AN INTERPRETATION  
OF A NATION

BY

PAUL SUPER

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

*The Polish Tradition* was written before the outbreak of war, and although a number of sentences are rendered out-of-date we have purposely refrained from altering them as they serve to show the indomitable spirit of a great people. It will be seen that at the time the book was written a firm attitude to Nazi Germany was always backed by a willingness for conciliation right to the end.

October 1939.





## ON PRONOUNCING POLISH NAMES

EVERY writer on Poland who writes in the English language faces the problem of getting Polish names and significant words into a form manageable by one not speaking Polish. Long experience has led me to the conclusion that the best thing to do is as a rule to keep to the Polish spelling and give the reader usable indications as to pronunciation.

Here is a key which has been found useful:

- a broad as in "father."
- c pronounced as ts except as follows, but never as k.
- c before i is ch.
- ch a strongly aspirated h.
- cz exactly as though it were ch.
- dz like j in "jump."
- e short as in "bed."
- i is ee.
- j is our y.
- l rounder and fuller than ours, and when crossed like a t it resembles our w. •
- o is between our o and aw.
- ó is like oo in "moon."
- rz like si in "vision."
- s before i is sh. •
- sz as though it were sh.
- u like oo in "moon."
- w is v.

y is a short i as in "is"; never as in "sky."

z as in English. There are two other kinds of z but they do not occur in this book.

z before i is zh.

As a rule each vowel is pronounced separately.

Always accent the next to the last syllable.

A few illustrations, chiefly names:

Boleslaw is Bo-le'swaw, the second l being crossed.

Jadwiga is Yad-vee'ga.

Jagiello is Ya-gee-el'wo, touching the l but lightly.

Matejko is Ma-tay'-ko.

Mickiewicz is Mits-kee-ay'-vich.

Mieszko is Mee-esh'-ko.

Pulaski is Poo-wa'ski, the l being crossed.

Sienkiewicz is Shee-en-kee-ay'-vich.

Sobieski is So-bee-e'-ski.

Stanislaw is Sta-ni'-swaw, i as in "is," the l crossed.

Szlachta is shlach'ta, the ch as in German "nacht."

Wilno is Veel'no.

Wit Stwosz is Veet Stvosh.

Wladyslaw is Vwa-di'-swav. Both l's are crossed,  
i as in "is."

Zygmunt is Zig'-munt; i as in "is."

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## HISTORICAL FOREWORD

POLAND emerges from the mists, uncertainty, and legends of its earlier centuries into authentic written history with the accession to power of its first great ruler Mieczyslaw the First, Mieszko for short, in 962, the most significant event of his career being his acceptance of Christianity in its Latin form in 966. He was followed by his capable son Boleslaw the Brave, the head of a nation now becoming Christian, a man of extraordinary organizing abilities and a warrior of note, of whose remarkable career the British historian G. E. Slocombe says, "it had no parallel in the history of contemporary Europe."

The vast empire built up by this able king was unfortunately divided among his sons and grandsons, in accordance with contemporary custom, into a group of four independent principalities with no central authority over them, a decentralization of control that resulted in disintegration. One of these dukes, Conrad of Mazowia, was troubled by the invasions of his northern neighbours, the then pagan Prussians, and in 1226 called in the Teutonic Knights, a militant order of monks, to conquer and evangelize these heathen. This the Knights did all too well, combining conquest and extermination as the most simple process of conversion and discipline, and so strongly established their rule that it was only broken by the Poles and Lithuanians at the Battle of Grunwald



in 1410 and the long-deferred treaty of 1466, giving the Teutonic Knights East Prussia but as vassals of the Polish king. For the kingdom had been restored by Wladyslaw the Short in 1320, a warlike king, followed by his peaceful and wise son Kazimierz the Great, 1333-1370—the last of the Piast dynasty.

The grand-niece of this king, Jadwiga, became queen and ruler in 1383. In 1386 she married Wladyslaw Jagiello, Grand Duke of Lithuania, and thus both led that prince and duchy into the Christian faith and united these two lands under one dynasty, a dynastic and social union deepened in 1413 and resulting in a complete political union as the Republic of Poland in 1569, three years before the death without heir of the last of the Jagiello kings, Zygmunt August, when Poland was at the height of its Golden Age.

Then followed the series of elected kings, the greatest of whom were Stefan Batory, 1576-1586, and Jan Sobieski, who led the Polish cavalry to besieged Vienna and there defeated the Turks in the great victory of 1683.

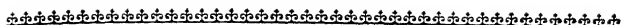
In 1648 troubles in the Ukraine culminated in the Cossack wars, soon followed by wars with Russia, the Swedish wars of 1656-1660, and other minor wars, all so weakening Poland that its decline as a power set in, to end in the three partitions of Poland among Prussia, Russia, and Austria in 1772, 1793, and 1795, and the disappearance of Poland as a State until November 11, 1918, when the famous 14 points of President Wilson, the victory of the Allies, and the military genius of the late Marshal Pilsudski restored to Poland her unity and independence.

Polish history thus falls into five periods:

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| First Period  | The Piast Dynasty, 962-1370.                    |
| Second Period | The Jagiellon Dynasty, 1386-1572.               |
| Third Period  | The Elected Kings, 1574-1795.                   |
| Fourth Period | The Period of Partitioned Poland,<br>1795-1918. |
| Fifth Period  | Contemporary Poland, 1918-                      |

Other significant events in Polish history will be spoken of later in relation to topics developed as part of the theme of this book. This brief outline will suffice as a framework sketch. A short history of Poland may be found in the 14th Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and more extensive accounts are listed in the bibliography at the end of this book.





## CHAPTER ONE

# THE NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF A NATIONAL TRADITION

### 1. *How this book came to be written*

When Dr. W. J. Rose was inaugurated as Reader in Polish in the University of London in February 1936 he chose as the theme of his inaugural lecture the interest-awakening topic "The Polish Tradition." In the opening paragraph of the printed edition of that lecture Dr. Rose states that he proposes rather to raise issues than to resolve them, implies that he will not make startling revelations of any kind, and would be content if his presentation led to future studies of the subject by others. The present monograph is at least one realization of that hope. I found the topic extraordinarily stimulating, leading me to desire to crystallize into very definite form the observations of seventeen years of residence among the Poles and extensive study of their land, life, and literature—the last with the help of my wife, both a linguist and an expert in research. During the three years that have passed since the day of Dr. Rose's address I have read, conversed, observed, and made extensive notes with the express intention of trying to set down on paper just what the Polish tradition is and the functions it serves in Polish life.

This book, therefore, comes out of a long experience with Poles, and is written from a foreground of extensive

reading on the subject and hundreds of conversations and meetings with Poles, and from a background of a fairly wide experience of life in some thirty countries.

The time for such writing is ripe. Poland plays an ever-increasing role in Europe, and tradition plays an important part in determining and directing the conduct of the Pole, both privately and collectively, as an individual and as one unit of a large nation. Therefore a clear statement of what a Pole is, mentally and socially, and of the traditional forces which influence his actions, should serve a useful purpose. For people today want to know who and what the Poles are, what motives guide their actions, what ideals beckon them on, what the nature of their actions is likely to be in a given set of circumstances. To be sure this is no entirely new thing. "The Polish Problem" has been a feature of almost every major international European problem for centuries—certainly since 1572, when the era of elected kings began; and even long before that, when in the 13th Century Teuton pressure from the west and Tartar pressure from the east made the course of Polish history a matter not only of wide interest but of concern. Hence the sub-title of this book, "An Interpretation of a Nation."

Not in other countries with which I am somewhat familiar would I be tempted by such a topic or prompted to dig for material related to it. In no few lands tradition serves only a minor or inconspicuous social function. In Poland, however, both because the tradition is definite and because it is a heritage of which to be proud, tradition is an active factor in life. Furthermore, though Poland is forward-looking and progressive, the attitude of its

people toward tradition is warm and appreciative; in the words with which Dr. Patkanowska begins a recent article in an English paper published in Warsaw, "Poland loves tradition"; the word occurs in contemporary life and writing with a surprising frequency, and the idea is potent in determining conduct.

In discussing some fifty or more elements which enter into the composition of the present-day Polish tradition or contribute to it, the matter of arrangement, sequence, proportion, and emphasis is a real problem. To present the elements of the Polish tradition in a supposed order of importance would count against the clarity which comes from logical grouping as to kind, and furthermore in seeking logical grouping one separates from each other elements very closely associated in life. As to emphasis, it will be safe to assume that the amount of space devoted to an element of tradition is the best indication of its significance; as a direct contribution to proportion, at the end of the essay we shall return to the major elements in a paragraph of final appraisal.

## 2. *The meaning of the word "tradition" as here used*

The word "tradition" can be used in two ways, the one relating to a single and specific custom, the other to a broad general point of view. As an illustration of the former, it is a tradition in Poland, a custom, for the whole family to gather for a Christmas Eve supper served just as the first star of the evening appears, and consisting of traditional foods. This essay does not deal with "tradition" in that sense of the word. Its scope here is far wider. And yet the word is not here used in a sense quite so wide as in Dr. Ellwood's definition

when he says: "By tradition we mean, in the sociological sense, all knowledge, beliefs, standards, and values handed down from the past." Dr. E. A. Ross comes near to the author's intention when he describes tradition as "a way of thinking handed down from generation to generation." The Polish tradition in the present sense is the Polish heritage. It is "the social estimate of things that are socially important." It is "what a generation takes over from its fathers," Dr. W. J. Rose says, "the ideas and institutions to which it holds, the likes and dislikes that are the springs of its action."

The Polish tradition is those attitudes and reactions which the Pole feels especially characterize him as a Pole and differentiate him from other nations; it is the typical Pole's set of basic assumptions about life, the group of consciously held first premises from which he is apt to start his reasoning or which prompt his spontaneous acts. He knows that when he is true to the best Polish tradition his reactions to such ideas as democracy, freedom, religion, toleration, intellectual culture, social manners, and a score of others, will be of a very specific type. He knows that whatever these words may mean to men of other lands, to him they mean something very definite, tangible, and Polish, and he has a strong tendency to conform to the quite Polish content of these words. They suggest long accepted "patterns of behaviour and belief."

Tradition may be characterized in a phrase of Ellwood's as "the mental facts of social life." It guides a man's action when in contact with other people; it is also something which operates quite in private. It is, as Dr. Emil Durkheim has said, "the totality of the beliefs

and sentiments common to the average member of a social group," and is "diffused throughout the extent of the society."

The whole matter is set forth very clearly in the opening paragraphs of Chapter XII of R. S. Lynd's *Middletown in Transition*. Mr. Lynd there refers to "the presence of large elements of repetition and coherence in the culture." (Of Middletown) "As one moves about the city one encounters in the city government, in the churches, in the press, in the civic clubs, and in the folk-talk on the streets and about family dinner tables, points of view so familiar and so commonly taken for granted that they represent the intellectual and emotional short-hands of understanding and agreement among a large share of the people. They are the things that one does and feels and says so naturally that mentioning them in Middletown implies an 'of course.' This by no means implies that in carrying on its daily operations of living Middletown acts necessarily according to these values which it affirms. Often quite the contrary is the case. But these are the values *in the name of which* it acts, the symbols which can be counted upon to secure emotional response, the banners under which it marches."

Just so. And now for Middletown substitute Poland, and for the cross-section of a day substitute the long view of hundreds of years of history, and you have a paragraph about the Polish tradition.

### 3. *The class chiefly in mind is the "szlachta" or gentry*

When one begins to study the tradition of a country having a very old civilization, as has Poland, he soon discovers that there is not just one tradition, but that,



on the contrary, there are many. There is one group of traditions characteristic of a given class, while other classes cherish a different body of tradition; not entirely different to be sure, but containing various special elements and lacking others commonly found in a higher or lower class of society. The time factor also enters in, and it is necessary to note that at one time it is of the 16th Century that one is speaking, at another of the 20th. Further, the tradition varies with different parts of the country, gaining certain special elements in the east and emphasizing others in the central or western provinces. Other variations enter in when we make the necessary contrast of city and country.

Thus when one wishes to speak with complete accuracy it is necessary to say that such and such a tradition was characteristic of the members of such and such a social class, living on the land, at a certain time, say the early, middle, or latter part of a given century. It might also be necessary to indicate that such was the tradition as seen by that class itself. What looked white from within may have appeared quite gray or even black to an outside observer.

Let us therefore stake out the territory we are going to explore. When Poland had reached full-grown statehood under Kazimierz the Great, 1333 to 1370, and wide territorial extension, after the union of the Polish and Lithuanian dynasties in 1386, four major social groups are to be distinguished, and these become more and more marked as the nation develops under the, for those centuries, liberal and enlightened reign of the Jagiellon kings. The reign of the last two of these kings, Zygmunt I and Zygmunt II, 1506 to 1572, constitutes

the "Golden Age" of Polish history, and this era is a good bench mark from which to begin our survey.

There were four principal elements in the population, clearly defined classes; the first three Polish, the fourth largely foreign. The Polish classes were, at the top, the great lords and magnates; next, the less wealthy landed gentry; these two classes together constituted a class called the "szlachta," which we shall fully describe later on. "Szlachta" is often translated "nobles"; it is more correctly translated "gentry"; the lower classes of the gentry were little more than simple freemen, as we shall see. The third and lowest Polish class was the peasants, not citizens of the Republic and from 1496 on no more than serfs. The fourth social group, the dwellers in the cities, also constituted a special class, having, notwithstanding wealth and education, few civic rights.

The chief body of the Polish nation, not indeed numerically but nevertheless in fact, was the szlachta. Proportionally they were a larger part of the nation than is implied in any other land by the word "gentry," numbering many tens of thousands. They were the real state, and as such the makers and carriers of Polish civilization, the embodiment of the Polish tradition. With the development of modern industrial and commercial civilization and the growth of cities certain changes began to take place; this transformation of ancient into modern Poland was completed when, because of the vast vicissitudes of the Great War and the subsequent Bolshevik invasion, the rich with few exceptions lost their fortunes and new classes began to take form; the ancient aristocracy has largely vanished, a new wealthy class has arisen, a great middle-class intelligentsia

is being formed, and Poland's classes today are (1) the few families of means, (2) a high-grade intelligentsia and business-class, (3) the working proletariat, and (4) the land-owning farmer into which the peasant is evolving.

Both from my study of Polish literature and from my personal contacts it is this szlachta and the middle-class intelligentsia that I know best; it is they who above all others formerly carried and now carry the Polish tradition, and it is largely with them that these pages will deal. The peasants and the working people I do not know so well, and written sources about them are less numerous. Nor do these classes, indeed, correctly represent what I choose to describe as the Polish tradition. To learn it, embody its best features, and improve it, is their goal, not yet their achievement except in individual cases.

#### 4. *The nature of a national tradition*

We may speak of the Polish tradition as the main threads of Polish thought through the centuries, the dominant ideas moulding the life and opinions and guiding the actions of the influential elements in the Polish social structure from early times until today. These ideas are the traditions of the people, rather than of the state, for we find them operating with great power during the 19th Century when no Polish State existed but when the nation tenaciously endured, and, indeed, lacking a state, hugged its traditions to its bosom all the more closely. Not what the Polish State had been and had done, but what the Polish people had been and in essence still were, these were the components of the tradition; it was carried on by men and women, not

by governmental bodies or agencies. The achievements resulting from the tradition were personal, not official, and those achieving persons of former glorious centuries still lived in the bodies and memories of their descendants, state or no state. When Poland was restored in 1918, the tradition, long preserved in the person of living Poles, sprang at once into political and national effectiveness. Witness the turning back of the Bolshevik invasion.

Traditions, in their origins, are not artificially constructed and called into being; they are natural responses of given psychological characteristics to actual needs and circumstances. They are not definitely planned, they are spontaneous reactions to potent forces in the physical, social, economic, political, religious, and geographical environment. Continuing, they become almost a framework of life, acquire various kinds of enforcement and authority, such as custom, sacredness, conviction, the pressure of parents, teachers, priests, companions, the general population, and even laws and constitutions. Their quality of rightness, appropriateness, and recognized utility is perhaps their highest sanction. To them are attached both material and spiritual rewards and punishments. They are transmitted by both conscious and unconscious processes, word of mouth, statutes, imitation, print, education, by those great basic agencies of society, the home, the school, the Church, work and play groups, and the State. They take form as social customs, ceremonies, the whole life of the cultural group. Eventually in old countries, as in Poland, the tradition comes almost to have an entity of its own; this each succeeding generation passes on, the tradition lives and

endures, and becomes at last a vital link binding the generations together in a bond of almost biological quality and living reality. The tradition receives further concreteness as it becomes embodied in the person of some conspicuous hero or heroine of history, such as Jan Zamoyski, Queen Jadwiga, or Jan Sobieski. Here, however, it is necessary to remark that observance of the tradition is not always unanimous; at best it is only generally accepted and widely current.

The tradition is not even effective at all times with a given person. The Polish tradition is the body of points of view the typical Pole believes in profoundly, but he is not necessarily always loyal to it; in pressing circumstances or under special conditions he may be untrue to or vary from his national tradition, betray it in practice, fall below its requirements. Thus we see that the tradition is more or less of an ideal of life; represents, in a way, the best thoughts of the typical man, though indeed all Poles at times act in accordance with certain requirements or characteristics of the tradition. It is this conformity, as much as race or blood, which marks Poles as Poles; it is their indication of membership in what sociologists call "the we-group."

The pressure to conform to the tradition is both internal and external. Internal in so far as a given tradition, hospitality, for instance, represents deep inner needs, for companionship in this case, and a desire to learn about the outside world, news of which the guest brings. But whatever the tradition, it will be found to have very valid roots in the needs, habits, and interests of the group. The tradition is exterior to the individual in so far as it bears in upon him from the outside, as

social expectation of him contrary to which he does not care to go, or in subtle ways through what he hears and observes. He sees acts and their consequences and chooses a course likely to yield him satisfaction or to preclude annoyance or trouble. The exterior quality of the tradition is indicated by the extent to which it may be modified within the lifetime of a single individual or even within a few years if the pressure of circumstances is powerful.

So far as traditions here in Poland centre around or find exemplification in persons, they seem to me to relate not to the physical prowess and bodily strength and boldness of individuals, but rather to the spiritual characteristics or qualities which underlie certain acts of valour or great achievements. It is Jan Sobieski's romantic and almost quixotic dash to Vienna to save that besieged city from the Turks which is sung, not the cleaving power of his sword and the number of Turkish heads he cut off. Florian Szary's heroic endurance with three spears in his bowels is celebrated, not the number of German knights he dismounted in battle. And so through a long catalogue of heroes and events; not brute force but quality of spirit gathered tradition about it. There are, of course, stories of physical might and achievement, but on the whole it is the man, not the animal, which is celebrated in tradition.

We have been dealing in this section with the *nature* of the Polish tradition. Seen among other national traditions, how shall one characterize it? The Greek tradition was beauty; the Hebrew, righteousness; the Roman, law and order; the American is freedom; the Chinese, reverence for ancestors; the French, intelli-

gence and taste. Of the Polish tradition I would say that it is knightliness, nobility in its best sense, and a high evaluation of the spiritual aspects of things. Dr. Roman Dyboski expressed a very Polish sentiment when he wrote the words, "the forces of the spirit are the true mainsprings of life."

5. *Kinds of tradition, and where they are found*

But the Polish tradition, though it possesses a certain unity and self-consistency, is not single; it is multiple, has many branches, finds expression in a large number of areas of life, and it is the ultimate sum of all these units of tradition which constitute the Polish tradition as a whole. In my analysis of Polish life I have found over fifty elements of authentic Polish view-point, and the picture of the Polish mind is not complete without a sketching of each of these. For convenience of treatment I have grouped them under six main heads and of each of these heads I shall make a chapter. These main groupings are:

1. The Polish tradition as to social classes, their characteristics, duties, privileges, and relationship.
2. The Polish tradition as to personal traits of mind and character.
3. Traditions as to social life and relationships.
4. Traditions of national political organization and life.
5. Traditions rooted in the facts of Polish geographical location.

6. Traditions as to the influence of other nations upon Polish life and thought, and of relations to other nations.

Where does one look or find these traditions, points of view, characteristic modes of thought and types of conduct? In the contacts and experiences of daily life with Poles, of which I have enjoyed many years. In a study of Polish history and literature, which has become such a hobby with us that our Polish friends call our home a Polish museum. We find the tradition in the examination of historic paintings and a growing understanding of what they represent. We gain a knowledge of it from visits to the older Polish cities and a study of their historic buildings and monuments. Proverbs carry the tradition from century to century, as also do songs and stories of persons and events. The tradition turns up in conversations, in what our Polish friends agree to do or refuse to do, and in the editorial and news columns of the daily press. With a sympathetic eye and an understanding heart each hour, almost, contributes to our knowledge of the essential aspects of the Polish spirit.

#### 6. *The roots of the Polish tradition*

What are the roots of the Polish tradition, the creative ground from which it springs? How did its various elements originate, take form, and receive general acceptance? No one answer covers the whole field.

Certain traditions are the evolving customs and viewpoints of a social class, the crystallized opinion of a self-conscious group as to how it may best retain and



pass on the characteristics of itself and the relationships and privileges which it most values. Of this the Polish tradition of the *szlachta* as a closed brotherhood is an illustration.

Other traditions owe their origin to racial psychological characteristics, which are partly hereditary and partly environmental. Polish toleration is not all pure virtue; it is in part due to a lack of combativeness, to a mind occupied with its own thoughts and therefore willing to leave your mind also to your own thoughts, to a certain Polish non-aggressiveness which is not to be confused with laziness, for the Pole is not lazy. Races, nations, seem to me to have a sort of national equation or formula, and some things are in this formula and other things are not, though this figure must not be pressed too far.

The political organization of a nation, arising from whatever causes, becomes in due time tradition, and of this the age-long Polish democracy even in the framework of a monarchy, is a good illustration.

Traditions are developed by social life also. The contacts and experiences of the day and the resulting reflections upon these daily events and occurrences lead to a generally accepted conclusion that life proceeds most smoothly when certain forms of intercourse and dealing are mutually observed. Here we cite the traditional and at one time almost florid courtesy of the educated Polish classes as a case in point.

Other traditions again are, in a way, of foreign origin. They are copied from or reactions against the modes of life of other peoples with which the Poles have had extensive contact. The traditional interest in intellectual

things is clearly of Latin and Italian origin, while to Rome is easily traced much of the 16th Century mental furniture and view-point of the Pole of that day. Negatively, a certain coarseness experienced in contact with Germans over many centuries has had its effect in producing an opposite mentality.

Clearly the events of history and broad contemporary influences father no few traditions. In Poland the social-mindedness of people from the eastern frontier over against Russia is an accepted tradition and its causes are found in the history of those provinces, the inhabitants of which had to struggle both for life and for culture against Tartar, Turk, and Muscovite.

Which leads at once to the fact of the influence of geographical location upon tradition. To step out of the Polish setting for a moment for a graphic illustration, consider the influence of the frontier and its life upon the American tradition, or, equally vivid, the bearing of England's insular location upon the English tradition. We shall find cognate influences shaping the tradition of Poland.

To the above roots and sources, I believe, almost all the characteristic features of Polish attitude and life can readily be traced; but there are others of which one can only say that they are opinions, points of view, which have arisen, won approval, spread, and become generally held; they have taken form as laws, customs, rituals, institutions, which have received wide acceptance, practice, and support; these formal agencies have in turn operated to generate and maintain the points of view to which they owe their origin.

But we must not overlook the effect of language on

tradition. This is both positive and, through absence, negative. Poles of all classes tend to use finer words than do we Americans or English. I have been struck by this time and again. How often on quite simple occasions I have heard a Pole begin a request with "Will you be so kind as to——" or, "Do you permit me to——," and such words as munificent, deign, emanation, and what we ordinarily call "big words" find a much more frequent place in the everyday speech of everyday people in Poland than is the custom in the western world. These elegancies of manner, by no means affectations, both form and represent elements in the Polish tradition, the tradition of courtesy, for instance, deeply embedded in current Polish speech, and indicative of the traditional respect for the person of others.

Negatively, certain words and their corresponding effects in life are missing. There is no real word in Polish for home, for efficiency, for sportsmanship, for teamwork, for promoter and for no few other concepts which are undoubted elements in the tradition of the English-speaking world. Where there is a word, there is a tradition, and where the word does not exist its exact equivalent in life is also absent.

These two points are of course small indeed as compared with the service the Polish language rendered the Polish tradition in its preservation during the period of the partition when their common language was the most living and vivid of all the bonds binding the severed and repressed Poles together; but we are dealing here rather with the substance of the Polish tradition than with the agencies of its embodiment and preservation.



*Henryk Poddębny*

New National Museum, Warsaw



7. *Where and how the Polish tradition reveals itself*

Where does one encounter or discover the national tradition? In what manner does it reveal or disclose itself? Just where and when is it met? The places where I have actually found the Polish tradition are of course the answer to these questions. There is material here for a whole essay; a brief enumeration must suffice.

Polish literature supplies one with his most immediate cues. Such a series of historic novels as Sienkiewicz's famous and widely translated Trilogy leads one at once into the Polish heart and mind. In these books can be found reference to almost all the two-score or more elements of the Polish tradition which I shall later set forth. Naturally histories contain this material also, and especially those written for use in schools or for non-Poles. Poland has many modern books on its own structure and culture, Lozinski's *Polish Life in Former Ages*, for instance, and Bystron's *History of the Customs of Old Poland*. Editorials in the daily press carry an undercurrent of traditional view-point, and news stories often reflect the angle of the typical Polish point of view. But most fruitful of all sources is the wealth of literature and current writing printed during or about the 16th Century and books of more recent issue dealing with those colourful and romantic years. None of this exists in English; one must dig about for it in mediaeval Latin and old Polish, but the yield is rich and rewarding. For this research work I am indebted to my wife, who has assembled a whole library of this source material, largely in 19th Century reprints, some of it post-war, while a few of the books are time-scarred originals.

Next comes art. Though not world-famous, Poland has a rich and abundant art from Gothic and Renaissance times down to today, and in the pictures painted by Polish artists one readily finds the Polish mind.

Locate the national heroes and see what they embodied and stood for and you will learn other elements of the Polish tradition. I have observed elsewhere that there is a surprising lack of military statues in Poland, and an abundance of monuments to great poets, writers of prose, scientists, musicians, and civic patriots. The post-war years brought about the erection of various war memorials, but these picture an event, not a tradition. The older statues and heroes are as indicated above. The regaining of freedom was so colossal an occurrence in Polish history that it throws other things temporarily out of perspective, though it too, representing love of liberty, is one of the richest and most colourful traditions of all Polish life these thousand years; as we shall see.

Conversation also reveals the tradition. How could it be otherwise with a tradition in which courtesy, toleration, democracy, and intellectual interest are living elements? Chivalry, idealism, love of the soil, sense of national mission, religious feeling or at least respect for religion, all these are sure to appear in any long talk with a typical Pole.

The official acts or findings of conventions and the method of conducting discussions and conferences, Poles acting in unison in official or even in informally conducted bodies, bring out the tradition, for naturally Poles under normal circumstances act in accordance with it; for instance, love of democracy and deep resentment

of anything bordering upon dictatorship or infringement of one's rights and dignity as an individual.

The spontaneous reactions of individuals in situations making sudden demands upon them also reveal the national spirit. How many times I have smiled at a Warsaw policeman's "Please sirs" in handling a crowd, under circumstances which would have called quite other words from the lips of a New York "cop." And in a former book I have told of the remonstrating tone in which the president of the Warsaw Y.M.C.A. said to me, "But that would not be democratic," when I proposed using an American go-getter method on a certain occasion.

The laws that are passed and the constitution adopted embody the tradition. In his preface to an edition of the Polish constitution of April 23, 1935, Mr. Stanislaw Car, Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, says: "Apart from England, Poland was the only other country which as early as the middle of the 15th Century had appropriate statutes affording guarantees of personal inviolability." Yet in Poland such a charter was granted thrice in the 15th Century, in 1422 and reaffirmed in both 1430 and 1433. In the new constitution itself we find, in Article 4, "The State assures free development of community life," and ancient Polish democracy is reaffirmed in Article 7 in the words, "These rights cannot be restricted by origin, religion, sex, or nationality."

In the historic but ill-fated constitution of 1791, overthrown by the Russians in 1793 and 1795, liberty and protection to all religious creeds is assured, and provision was made for the revision of the constitution every twenty-five years, an expression of the Polish



traditional aversion to too much rigidity of governmental form.

The crises and events of history not only create traditions, but reveal them and afford opportunity for their expression. The determined but utterly idealistic and hopeless revolts of the Poles against the Russian domination in 1830 and 1863 demonstrated in unmistakable terms the Polish passionate love of freedom, and the heroism, dash, and devotion to nation and his ancestral religion characteristic of the Pole.

Finally, the institutions people erect and support are expressions of their traditional attitudes and feelings. Here I wish merely to state the point, not elaborate it. As illustrations one may cite the following: The traditional love of learning finds expression in the erection of at least one university in each of the large and older cities of Poland, in the central library in Warsaw with five branches and fifty-three circulating lending stations within the city, or the fact that all three of Poland's post-war presidents of the Republic have been chosen from the ranks of university professors, as also have been no few premiers and other cabinet ministers, and in the wide national popularity of the educational movement called "Mother of Schools."

#### 8. *The functions served by the tradition*

Becoming increasingly conscious of the Polish national tradition with the passing of the years which I have lived in its midst, and realizing its vital and enduring quality, it has interested me to seek to locate quite definitely the functions it serves. There are not less than seven, and these I shall proceed to state.

Tradition is social memory. It is one of the chief carriers of the culture of a group from generation to generation. With folkways, written records, and architecture, it is one of the quartet of forms in which a nation remembers its past, and transmits it to the future.

It is thus the conservator of the cultural gains of the past, the embodiment of what experience has taught and the insurance that the lessons of former years, both the good and the painful, will not be forgotten and lost. It serves this function in both oral and written form, and as things not said but lived or done.

Conformity to the tradition of a nation is also one of the evidences an individual gives of his belonging to it, his spiritual certificate of membership, his living passport. In the country under consideration to think thus and to act thus is to be a Pole; to think and act too differently is to be foreign, something else.

Next to blood itself, tradition is the chief element of national unity and solidarity. Possibly language is more important in this respect, but of that I am not sure, knowing somewhat Switzerland, and the British Empire, where the tradition may be said to be a stronger bond than language, for in neither of these political units is the language uniform. The strength of the national unity in Poland is apparent even to foreign observers. Long centuries ago an Italian named Kallimachus said of Poland: "On these widespread plains there is one people and one nation, differing neither in custom, speech, nor organization, united in common acceptance of human and divine laws. Here is rather one house and one family than a nation."

For Poland is a cultural, not a racial or physical unity. Poles not well informed sometimes think they are all of one blood, but such is not the case. On this point Poland's high cultural authority, Professor Roman Dyboski, says, "Poland, being situated at the crossing of two great highways of trade and migration, it is the natural result of countless early and later wanderings and settlements, conflicts and fusions on her territory that a considerable number of strongly distinct types of the white race should appear side by side and in various combinations within her borders. Long heads and round heads, the light-skinned and the dusky, the fair-haired and the dark meet each other and mingle with each other on Polish soil."

Thus we find in Poland many racial types, Slav, Scandinavian, Germanic, Italian, Tartar, Armenian, both peasant and gentry, mixed into a recognizable national unity. Race therefore not being the basis of the national unity it must be found elsewhere, and it is found indeed partly in language and largely in common culture, common tradition, a generally accepted and lived way of life and point of view. I regard the chief basis of Polish unity to be the Polish tradition, the broad body of attitudes, customs, and ways of looking at things which constitute the distinct and characteristic Polish culture, the views generally held and lines of conduct generally followed by the Pole when reacting in accordance with the best commonly accepted standards and customs of his nation. This tradition is not constant, of course. Elements of it emerge and submerge in times favourable to it or unfavourable, are strengthened or weakened by great historic trends and events. But the

substance remains and survives both catastrophe and circumstance, throughout the ages and across the land.

It follows, then, that the tradition is the basis and agency of assimilation. The power of the Polish tradition as an assimilating agent is enormous and has been so throughout history. The central tribe of pre-history and of the dawn of the Christian era, the Polanie, assimilated into itself all the surrounding tribes and spread its forms of culture far up into Lithuania and down into the Ukraine. It swallowed up and absorbed Germans from the western borders. German husbands of Polish wives become Poles, a widely known fact. The German name may remain, but the type becomes Polish. Who was more Polish than the great Primate of the 16th Century, Hosius, or the historian of that century, Kromer, both of German origin? The Polish Armenians, also, and the Wilno Tartars are now thoroughly Polish in language and in life.

Five functions of national tradition have been discussed. It has been described as social memory, conservator of culture, identification of the individual, basis of unity and solidarity, and as the agency of assimilation. Two more functions need to be indicated. Sumner says the traditions of a national group "coerce and restrict the new-born generation," and "inhibit thinking." This partly because "they never contain any provision for their own amendment." They put no questions to life, they only answer them. A Polish writer has observed of the *szlachta*, "In this charmed circle they lived without freedom of thought or criticism. To the Polish tradition belonged the Jew as a commercial agent, the serf, the despised townsman, the bogey of royal absolutism and a

hereditary throne, freedom from tolls and taxes, the cult of the saints and of Mary, and the idolatry of the coat-of-arms." It was these things which "contained no provision for their revision" and lack of such provision and revision inhibits progress.

And finally, tradition moulds character. Ellwood quotes Hobhouse as saying that "any tradition will obviously call forth from human beings the qualities appropriate to it, and it will, in a sense, select the individuals in which those qualities are best developed, and will tend to bring them to the top of the social fabric." "Thus," adds Ellwood, "the social tradition moulds both the character of the individual and the behaviour of the group." It establishes and tends to fix somewhat permanently a type and mode of thought and action.

Life is always influenced, often powerfully moulded, by the ideas to which one pays attention, that catch our interest, stir our imagination, and win or command our loyalty. These ideas guide our actions, govern our behaviour. The Polish tradition is the set of ideas which for one reason or another has as a rule caught the imagination and thus influenced the thought and conduct of Poles for the past four hundred years. When these ideas do not fully determine his response to life's situations they at least influence it and make their claims both known and felt.

In the light of all the above perhaps one may add yet another function which a national tradition serves. It indicates to some degree the course a nation is likely to take in an important crisis and what its reaction may be to the pressure of great events.

9. *Tradition as indicator of values*

Canon Barry, Chaplain to King George VI of England, has written in one of his books that "the most important question about any man is what he regards as the chief of all values, that which he thinks is most worth living for." Following this indication, I wish to examine the Polish tradition from the point of view of values, for the existence of a strong and clear national tradition implies a group of deep underlying convictions as to what is most worth while in life. This strata of basic belief, foundational ideas, appears to me to be in Poland composed of the elements about to be enumerated. They are the things which answer the questions, For what does a Pole strive? What is he most unwilling to give up? With what does he part most regretfully? What is he least ready to sacrifice, and for what, indeed, is he willing to die? In this set of values all the characteristic Polish traditions will be found to have their roots, or to grow from this soil.

Here a mere naming suffices; in subsequent pages I shall explain, delimit, and illustrate these values as they find concrete expression in widely accepted traditions or modes of life. These, I believe, are the things most valued by Poles through the ten centuries of their written history and across the broad acres of their land, the order of the naming being purposely not systematic. Religion, especially their Catholic faith; chivalry or knightly conduct; Christian character and behaviour; individuality or personality; freedom or liberty, personal and national; democracy, more as a social order than as a way of personal life; dignity and propriety, including courtesy; honour and self-respect; intellectual

and social culture, with an accompanying respect for learning; personal bravery or courage; idealism, as contrasted with materialism; hospitality; the claims of family; cleanness of body; the rights of others; a good opinion before the world. One knowing Polish life and literature can illustrate the above with literally volumes of instances and examples.

Negatively, the Poles do not hold as highly as do some, certain of the following values: Material gain and advantage; personal comfort; order; organization; time; uniformity and conformity; discipline; centralized national strength. Over some of these under-valuations I, as an American living among the Poles, have, to use an American figure, shed buckets of tears. And with their higher valuations my heart has often swelled with respect, admiration, and pride.

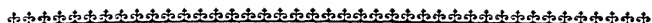
10. *The power of tradition not always the same*

At no time, it need hardly be said, have all Poles been loyal to the best in their national tradition, and equally true is it that there were times when the nation as a whole fell below its own traditional standards. Of these latter times Dr. W. J. Rose says that the tradition was inarticulate rather than extinguished, and I think his observation is true. Speaking of the civilizations of China and India the great Dutch scholar Hendrik Kraemar says that "the authority of tradition has remained throughout their history one of their immovable foundations." In Poland there have been periods when the tradition in some important element ceased to be authoritative and the foundations became covered over with rubbish.

The American sociologist C. H. Cooley has pointed out that the influences upon the individual and upon the nation are of two kinds, vertical and horizontal. The vertical are the historical, and to these belong national traditions. But always pressing in horizontally are powerful contemporary tendencies within the nation itself and also from other nations. A few sentences from Glenn Frank are both true of the past and all too true of the present. "The psychological forces playing upon our problem are more than the limited forces of our local situation. We are not hermetically sealed from what is happening elsewhere in the world. The subtle disintegration or willing surrender of self-government. The repudiation of freedom. The subordination of the individual. The exaltation of the State. The brutalizing advance of nationalism gone wild. The propagandist perversion of education. The popular desertion of the altars of religion. The intensification of class conflict." These influences of the day, thoroughly non-Polish, nevertheless press in upon Poland and may for a time alter a fine national tradition. The same sort of thing has happened in the past, during the Thirty Years War and during the social decay of the 18th Century when forces from without forced the course of Polish conduct from its normal path. But these influences did not then and will not now permanently alter the basic elements of the Polish tradition. Before the awful wave of the contemporary, ancient paths may for a time be submerged, but waves pass and subside, and that which is essentially good again appears and old landmarks once more guide the course. In this conflict of the historical and the contemporary the past always has its witnesses,



and they inevitably raise their voices for the preservation or restoration of that which was good, true, and socially useful. The voice of tradition will always be heard, and it will not lack charm, especially when the battle is between a good tradition and an evil fashion. Furthermore, the Poles, alert to the dangers of the present, are on their guard.



## CHAPTER TWO

# THE POLISH TRADITION AS TO SOCIAL CLASSES

### 1. *Poland a gentry democracy*

In reborn Poland, in contrast with pre-war Europe generally, the modern sociological theory of open classes find living embodiment; modern Poland is a State in which a man's own personal merits in combination with the opportunities provided in a free land and by a democratic government determine his social class. The extent to which the Pole of today goes up or down in the social order is determined by his own individual qualities and his reaction to the possibilities provided by his environment. But such was not always the case nor the traditions of the country, for Poland, like almost all the states of Europe, was a land of relatively fixed classes. The Polish tradition and social order with regard to classes was, however, of so special a character and possessed so many attractive and picturesque qualities that in spite of those sides of it of which one today does not approve, we shall find it both interesting and worth while to examine this highly important, even central element in the Polish tradition. The evils of that class system will in a few decades have passed away; its good sides provide the present-day Pole with some of his finest and most noble characteristics.

The Poland of an earlier era was a republic of nobles. Paradox though it may sound, it was a democracy of

great lords or magnates, medium rich landed gentry, and a lower order of gentry owning little more than the sword at their side but equal in status with the richest of the land. This social class was called in Polish the "szlachta," pronounced "shlachta," which though often translated "nobles" might better be rendered "gentry," and, indeed, it really meant little more than "citizen"; for only the szlachta enjoyed the privilege of citizenship in the republic, a state in which every citizen had important and valuable rights, a patent of nobility, and a crest or coat of arms. One of the fundamental tenets of the order of nobles was the absolute equality of all its members; natural corollaries of this theory were, the complete uniformity of the enjoyment of the privileges of this social position, and the equal burden of its responsibilities. From the szlachta were excluded the merchants and artisans of the cities, and the peasants. But so numerous was this gentry class, far more numerous than in any other land of Europe in the Middle Ages and early modern times, that it was not just oratory to refer to Poland, as all Poles did, as a republic, a commonwealth, an association of free people, the szlachta.

There were no Polish titles of nobility. At no time. The richest and the poorest of the szlachta (and the differences in degree of wealth were enormous) prefixed to his name the simple title "pan," pronounced with a broad "a," the word used today for "mister." It once meant "lord," but when *all* are lords, *who* is a lord? To be sure, certain of the richer magnates accepted titles of nobility from the Holy Roman Empire or from the Pope, or later from Austria or Germany, so there came to be a certain number of princes and counts, and the

old Ruthenian and Lithuanian title of prince was also carried forward; but Poland itself granted no titles.

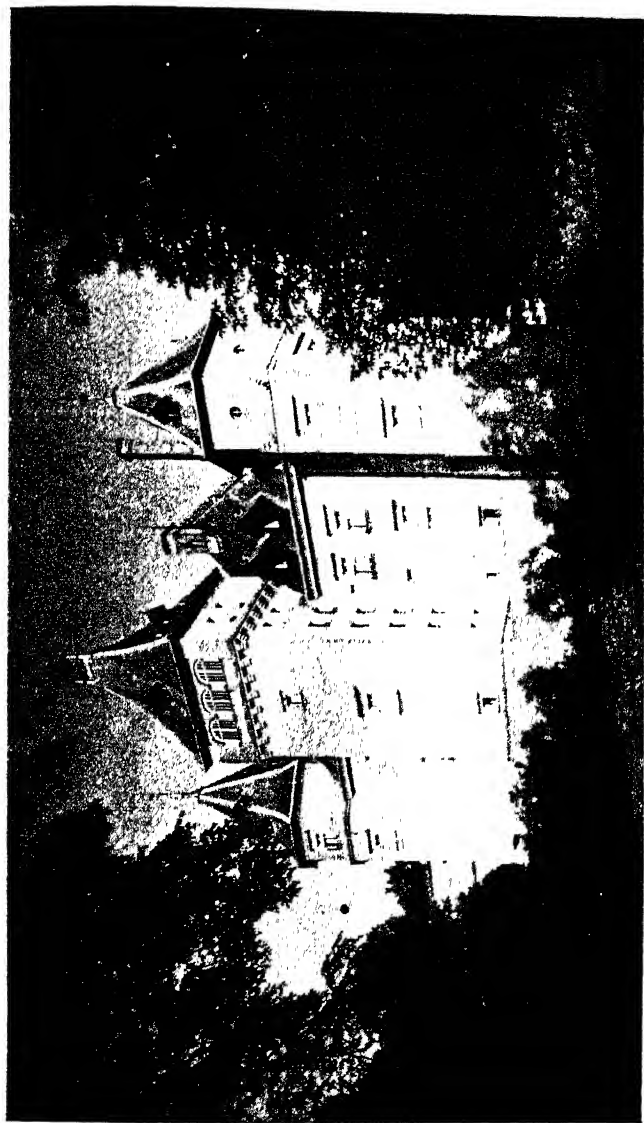
Some of the richer nobles would have enjoyed titles, but the influence of the lesser gentry prevented their being authorized by Parliament. This rule of no titles was definitely embodied in the constitution of 1638. The *pacta conventa* of 1736 states explicitly that the king can give no titles of nobility. Into the constitution of 1690 there somehow slipped the phrase "lesser nobility." This roused such a storm of protest that the term was withdrawn in the constitution of 1699, and "abolished for ever." "There can be no such thing as equality if there is a lesser and a greater."

Here, however, one must note the Polish love of *functional* titles, such as treasurer, governor, and others having no good English equivalent, titles even applied in appropriate form to the wife or son of the official, and used in everyday social address. Nor is this a thing of the past; it remains part of the Polish tradition. I recall a committee meeting in Krakow in which the serious problem arose as to which title to address a letter to a well-known citizen, Julius Nowak. He was a doctor of medicine and a professor, two titles to start on. He had been dean of his college, rector of the university, a member of the city council, prime minister, and was at that time a senator. This gave him seven life-long titles. Which one to use was a delicate social question. I forget where we wound up.

Picture the civilization of Poland in, let us say, A.D. 1500. Several centuries before this all the land had belonged to the ruler. Gradually he awarded vast estates here and there to his trusted associates and to

the leaders of his army, and also to lesser persons. The peasants held large areas in common, these peasant lands gradually, and sadly, be it said, passing into the hands of the magnates and the gentry. Naturally the more capable and those having better opportunities extended their holdings; the rich became richer, and, as the 16th Century drew to its close, the peasants became poorer and poorer; at last they were reduced to serfdom.

One likes to separate the elements of a situation for clarity of treatment, but three factors of the social situation, the *szlachta*, the peasants, and the land, are so combined and interwoven that to discuss one of the three without entering upon a description of the others seems almost impossible. Let us take an illustration of this inter-relatedness. Say that in 1500 a certain noble owned a large tract of land and lived, if not as one of the great lords, at least as a landowner of considerable importance. When he died his land was divided among his heirs, for in Poland there was no law or primogeniture by which only the oldest son inherited the estate, with the exception of a type of estate legally called an "*ordynacja*," of which there were never many, and which were passed on intact to the oldest son. This process of division among the sons and daughters went on generation after generation, and today the descendants of the family, though technically *szlachta*, are in fact simple farmers working a narrow strip of land and deriving from it only the most meagre existence. Thus no few of today's peasants, peasants in all the practical aspects of life, are in fact of gentry ancestry, but made poor by the system of land inheritance and by other



Castle of the Princes Czartoryski at Cracow, how.



factors to be mentioned later which prevented these impoverished sons from carving out a career and future for themselves.

Within the order of nobles itself, then, and beneath the magnates, were half a dozen grades of nobles or gentry, characterized in Polish by quite definite terms, such as landed gentry, cottage gentry, and grey gentry, this latter term referring to the plain grey homespun garments of these poorer szlachta. But again we must emphasize the theory of absolute equality of all, rich lord and petty gentry. They addressed each other as "brother," and the poorer tenaciously held to this rule of equality, especially when upon the death of the king they came together by the tens of thousands for the election, in general meeting, of a new one. It was, indeed, these very elections which were the occasion of the gaining of power by the poorer gentry, their status and authority being made clear to them by Jan Zamoyski in connection with the election of Henry of Valois as king in 1573, Zamoyski's heroic efforts on that and later occasions gaining him the unofficial title of "tribune of the people." To this day the aristocracy resent his work in that direction and regard it as a lamentable and historic error on the part of him who was the greatest of the Poles of pre-partition Poland. The number of the szlachta had by that time become very large, for even in the 15th Century a Venetian envoy estimated that there were 200,000 of them.

## 2. *The functions and duties of the gentry*

What were the functions, services, and obligations of this all-powerful ruling class?



Their occupation was to live on the land, see to its farming, and to take up arms in defence of the country when attacked. Apart from working the land they were the guardians of the State. They were a great agrarian and military order and were at home in either function. They were compelled to acquire skill at arms and in the art of war, for there was never a large national standing army. The *szlachta* was a vast "Order of Cincinnatus," men who on occasion dropped the plough and took the sword and lance. They were required to answer the summons to military service, and, in their own phrase, "pour out their blood" in defence of Poland when attacked. There was no provision for service beyond the frontier; that is, for wars of conquest. You must imagine these citizen-soldiers as mounted and armoured cavalry, accompanied to the field of battle by peasant retainers, these latter very miscellaneously armed and effective against trained and armoured soldiers only when the enemy had been broken and disorganized by the terrific charges of the world-famous Polish hussars, of which more will be said when we come to discuss the Polish military tradition.

In time of peace these knights were the nation, the State. They made its laws, preserved order, though not too well, elected a king when the throne became vacant through death or abdication, held office, and lived, according to individual taste, the life of farmer or courtier. Their avenues of occupation were strictly limited by custom and tradition amounting to law. They could be farmers, soldiers, officials, priests, courtiers, and scholars. They could not, however, engage in commerce, export or import, could not "measure out by the

yard nor weigh out by the pound," could not lend money for interest, could not be artisans or run an inn or tavern.

They considered that their agricultural, civil, and military services exempted them from taxes, and as they themselves made the laws, they generously put the financial burdens of the State on to other shoulders, those of city people, traders, hand-workers, and the peasants. In fairness it must be said that in time of war both king and nobles went deep into their private pockets to equip and maintain armed forces, and no few families literally ruined themselves in the military defence of the country. They gave both money and blood, and often with great unselfishness and heroism.

The szlachta had another privilege and function, that of electing into their order men and families deemed worthy of the membership in the order of nobles, or, in later days, as in the 18th Century, able to buy their way in. The new member received the crest and seal of an established family, and passed these valued possessions on to all their descendants. The king also could grant patents of nobility, but these, of course, carried no titles.

Certain things lay outside the province of the szlachta. The king himself controlled the mines and State monopolies, markets and fairs, and received the tolls for the use of roads and for transportation.

The tradition that the gentry kept out of commerce and all forms of handcraft and inn-keeping gave the Jew his traditional place in Polish life. The gentry not only kept out of certain vocations themselves, but, to ensure a large and constant supply of cheap labour, they

forbade the peasant to become an artisan or tradesman, and thus these necessary functions came to be served largely by Jews, partly by other foreigners, especially Germans. The responsibility for the exceedingly large number of Jews in Poland today, 10 per cent. of the total population, is chargeable partly to the commendable traditional toleration of the Pole, but in no small degree to the economic and social customs established and enforced by the szlachta. In his own name the noble could not enter commerce, but through his Jewish agent this was both possible and profitable and became a widespread practice. In the 18th Century a change in this matter began to take place, and under the last king no few rich nobles were engaged in commerce, industry, and banking.

In the gradual evolution of given and family names many of the gentry added the suffix "ski" to their family name; it is identical in meaning with the "de" of the French and the "von" of the Germans. Jan Tarnowski means John of Tarnow, the family name often being a place-name. Others never adopted this mode, especially those with names ending in "a" as Sapieha and Zawisza, or having the Lithuanian terminations seen in the names Radziwill, Jagiello, and Golkontt. Where two quite distinct families of nobles had the same name, the name of the crest preceded the name of the family, as Zuk-Skarszewski; for each crest itself had a name, that of the Zamoyski family for instance being Jelita, a name based on the historic origin of this crest. In times long past these crest names were clan symbols, marked on banners and shields and shouted as rallying cries in battle.

### 3. *Their general characteristics*

What were these people like, what were the characteristics of the gentry? Many of their characteristics derived from their mode of life as people living in manor-houses on large estates or on moderate-sized farms. In earlier centuries the men had to be ready for battle and every generation had its full taste of war. "We are born to arms and to war," they said of themselves, and considered the typical virtues of their class to be courage, nobility, disinterestedness, manliness in battle, endurance of pain, and quiet acceptance of the hardships of the field.

But more and more the knight ceased to become a man of battle and became the manager of a rural estate, attached to his family, the countryside, and the joys of a peaceful life of plenty. He settled into an Horatian praise of the satisfactions of rural life. His roots went deeper and deeper into the land, and his fields, his forests, and his neighbours became his major pre-occupations. The rewards of raising grain to be shipped to the outside world through the port of Danzig, Poland's city until 1793, outweighed the attractions of the army camp-fire and the clash of sword on helm and shield. Furthermore, war became increasingly a matter for professional soldiers and ever less an occupation for amateurs called to the colours to resist an invasion. The field of grain was victor over the field of battle.

With deep understanding Bystron gathers the elements of this situation into a few sentences. "He who once tastes in peace of life in the country, who feels himself unlimited lord of his own property, who becomes accustomed to giving out money which has flowed in from the sale of wheat or timber, him war no longer

pleases, for him it ceases to be easy to decide to leave his family countryside and his estate at the mercy of other members of his family or of his retainers. The quiet country becomes the ideal of noble virtuous life; at the same time there forms itself an ideology of indifference to public affairs."

Naturally the very physique of the gentry was affected by this healthy, well-nourished, vigorous rural and military life, and the social and intellectual culture which grew up as part of it. The bodies of the gentry were often larger, better formed, more fully developed than were those of the peasantry, their features more regular, and their manners more graceful and courtly because of the conditions of life many of the gentry enjoyed.

The 16th Century ushered in a true growth of interest in scholarly and artistic attainments, and no few of the palaces and castles of the richer nobles became genuine centres of intellectual discourse and occupations, these influences spreading to other families less wealthy but no less intelligent. On the other hand, no small part of social life was lived on a lower level. The mounting wealth of the gentry found no proper outlet. The Church forbade the lending of money at interest, and the field of legitimate investment was limited. Accumulating funds therefore went into fine palaces and grounds, elegant clothing and furniture, luxurious living, travel, and often into wild spending. The expansive Polish noble gave great feasts, entertained on a lavish scale, drank good Hungarian wine and Polish mead, a tasty liquor made of fermented honey, and enjoyed life generally. He loved to talk, to orate, to discuss.

His sword ever at his side, a sensitivity as to personal honour, and plenty of strong drink, often resulted in serious quarrels. The sword and the abundance of liquor have passed, but the delicate sense of honour has continued to be a mark of this class of Pole. In earlier years a noble would not sit at table with a man who had forfeited his honour. To lie was considered a disgrace, and "the word of a noble" was a bond. This tradition is not lost. How often one hears an act spoken of as "nie szlachetny," not noble. It is a potent condemnation to this day, and a restraint effective against ignoble conduct.

The Pole of Poland's Golden Age, the 16th Century, the time when so much of the Polish tradition took shape, was spoken of in his day by those who knew him as having the following catalogue of qualities, good and bad. Learning readily he was educated, but not too deeply. Of natural good taste he took quickly to the cultivated manners of his day. Frequently wild when young, years brought soberness and old age piety. He was open, sincere, hospitable, clever, shallow, alert, not inventive. Prone to undertake too much, to set too high a standard, and not to persevere. He preferred the sword to the pen, the land to the city; liked foreigners, foreign things, foreign ways, and consequently loved travel. He enjoyed idleness and entertainment, ate well and drank still better. In these terms he is characterized by foreigners who visited Poland and wrote about their travels and impressions, and to a certain extent by Polish contemporary writers.

Yet these terms of praise and dispraise do not tell the whole story. They do not account for the Krakow

University and Academy of Science, for Jan Zamoyski, rector of Padua University in the 16th Century when he was still in his early twenties, nor for the Treaty of Horodlo, 1413, the most Christian treaty of any land in any age, nor for a host of learned 16th Century Poles and their associates of which I shall write in a later section. However, those who know the Pole and his history see the correspondences of the picture with the reality. But there are other elements of which account must be taken, and just those elements, handed down through the centuries in the Polish tradition, which gave life in Poland years ago its peculiar colour and charm, its special character and quality, and which make the Pole of that gentry class as we meet him today, lovable, winning, idealistic, intellectual, and having in general the qualities that all who know him like in him.

Let us turn for a minute to the lesser nobles, to those clad in homespun and, with all the members of their family, working their own little farms. This man, too, had a crest, and he wore a sword, though it may have been without a scabbard and held up by a rope belt. His chief visible symbol of nobility apart from his sword was the "ganek," or little porch with columns and gable, which only a noble could add to his house, and possibly the very humble wagon in which he drove his family to church or to market. The poorest wore no boots, but bast shoes. But none was too poor to be proud of his status as belonging to the szlachta, or to seek to cultivate courtly manners. Another group of these poorer szlachta, having no land, became attached to the courts of some great lord, serving as soldiers or in some official capacity.

It is of very great importance to speak of these poorer szlachta, for only thus can one convey a picture of how truly Poland was a democracy, a very true republic though it had a king and a large group of rich nobles of princely domains and vast power with even their own private standing armies. But a democracy it was, and one with a large per cent. of the population enjoying the franchise and full legal and political equality.

This extensive nobility or gentry held all power in their own hands and most jealously guarded it. They were ultra-conservative, killed all efforts at reform, ruined the cities, impoverished and enserfed the peasants, gave the Jew his clutch on economic life, fought necessary centralization of state authority and administration and a much needed standing army, and perpetuated many social and political evils. They were self-willed, rebellious, and proud.

But this serious catalogue of faults frankly stated, the szlachta were also far from having no virtues, and these have been and will be further discussed in this monograph. Time and time again, far oftener than the western world of today knows, the Poles were the eastern defenders of about all that the western world holds dear, Christianity, order, and civilization itself, as eastern hordes of Tartars, Turks, and in 1920 the Bolsheviks swept up against Europe, to be turned back by the valour and sacrifice of the Poles, whose bodies today lie in the soil fought over a hundred times or who, living, carry on to coming generations the many admirable elements in the Polish tradition.

It has been necessary to dwell at length upon the szlachta and to speak no few times of the 16th Century,



for from this social class, and especially as it developed in that century, have come most of the ideas and ideals which are both the background and creative forces in the Poland of today.

#### 4. *The peasants.*

After the szlachta, the most important bearer of the Polish tradition is the peasant. In the days of the Kingdom he was the other half of Polish life, the cities then playing no great role. Crushed into serfdom during the 16th Century, he was held down and exploited by the nobles, who, as landowners and as the sole makers of the law, had almost unlimited power over the peasant until the beginning of his liberation in 1768. Kosciuszko carried this liberation a step further in 1794. During the years of the partitions the awakening peasant was used by the partitioning powers as a counter and tool against the gentry who sought to free themselves of their hated usurping rulers, and the general outcome was that the peasants played almost no part in Poland's 19th Century efforts to secure freedom. These movements were the work of the middle and upper classes of society. The Great War brought a change in all things, and the peasant has come into his day. Not yet a very bright day, but the sun has risen.

The old Polish tradition of the peasant is one thing; that of today another. With little religious instruction, but having to fit into their general Christian environment and conform to its requirements, the peasants emerged from the Middle Ages Catholic on the outside but remaining under the power of ancient tribal customs and inwardly pagan until far into the Christian era. Their

more kind-hearted owners regarded them as children, to be guided and protected, though exploited. To those less humane they were as cattle. The peasant had no sense of nationality, no rights, no incentive to progress. Little wonder then that the older tradition of the peasant was that he was crude, uncouth, lazy, foolish, cunning, pusillanimous, apathetic, resigned, drunken, given to minor theft, and cruel when aroused by avarice, oppression, or war. He lived to be lived on, saw no reason for trying to do well. Lived? No! He was simply the animal basis of the economic life of Poland. What was there, indeed, to make him otherwise?

But let us who know America before 1863 and England of the post-Napoleonic era hesitate a bit before we too roundly condemn the Polish gentry for all this. Only the land whose treatment of the poor and ignorant has always been noble can do that. That land I do not know. And it may be only just to add that bad as was the condition of the Polish peasant of the Middle Ages, informed historical writers consider it to have been better than that of the peasants of France and Germany, and far above that of the Russian moujik.

In the middle period of peasant history, that in which the peasant began to acquire rights, was permitted to own land and to possess a real measure of freedom, this patient, enduring, ignorant, superstitious, passive, indifferent man began slowly to take on new characteristics. He had no sense of nationality, indeed, and still referred to himself when asked as to his race or land as "tutejszy," "from here," but he developed other very valuable qualities. He began to realize the significance of soil, became first land hungry, and then passionately

devoted to his piece of ground, which he tended with care and no small intelligence; his long hard schooling in adversity made him conservative, religion became very real, and many peasants were truly pious. Those who know the contemporary peasant well speak of him as tenacious, realistic, courageous, and socially minded. From his ancestors he has inherited much useful practical knowledge of life, and with growing enlightenment he developed what is today his traditional wisdom. How often I have heard the expression "healthy peasant understanding!" He is far from being a fool.

The relation of the peasant to the Polish tradition is dual; he is in part its bearer, in part it relates to him. We turn to this second point.

Today the Polish tradition of the peasant is good. He stands high in public esteem, and indeed is the subject not only of great literature, as instance Reymont's Nobel-prize-winning novel *The Peasants*, but of idealization somewhat beyond the facts. The leaders of the nation realize his importance, both humanly and economically, government officials and social workers plan his welfare, politicians seek his support, and tourists praise his beautiful costumes, orderly farms, manly person. He is about to make a *new* tradition, this time his own. Well-informed Poles think that during the next ten years quite a new type of village and rural life will develop, due to forces already in operation. When asked what these forces are, they say: the school, the co-operative, the agricultural colleges, the army, the church, and peasant associations of young people. None who know Poland will be surprised at the inclusion of the army here. Compulsory military service for all is

one of the most educative influences entering the life of the young peasant. It literally reconstructs him, morally, physically, intellectually, and to some extent economically. The results are visual, and make the army very popular with all classes of the population, not the least the peasants.

Legally and socially all barriers to the upward advance of the peasant are long since a thing of the past. Some of Poland's most brilliant professors, capable professional men in the fields of law, medicine, and engineering, most respected Government officials and highly valued citizens are of peasant origin. Today poverty is the peasants' only handicap, and not all peasants are poor.

Here I should pause a moment to remind you that in this chapter I am not speaking so much about the Polish tradition itself, as about the people who are its creators, carriers, and embodiment. Just what the Polish tradition is will appear in the following chapters and stand out the clearer because of this background.

### 5. *The townspeople*

As Bystron well observes, when one stratum of society obtains privileges, it must always be at the cost of some other stratum. In Poland the extraordinary privileges of the szlachta were won at the cost of the peasants and of the city people. The strong agricultural and land-owning upper class used its power, not with, but as being the Government, to pass laws and establish customs which reduced the peasants to serfdom and the city first to impotency and then to ruin.

These forces bringing such unfortunate results in the

decline of the cities began to operate in the 16th and 17th Centuries; their consequences began to show in the 18th Century when the cities reached their lowest level. Both political and economic privileges and power were gradually stripped from the cities; their inhabitants, once an ambitious, wealthy, and cultured class, with each passing generation were of lower culture and ambition and took no part in political life. The pure Polish population lived on the land; the people of the cities were to no small degree of foreign origin, chiefly German and Jewish, and were thus subject to a double disadvantage, that of social class and of racial origin, though of course race played no such role in earlier centuries as it plays now in our benighted twentieth.

Through this disenfranchising of the city population and establishing of their economic disadvantages Poland brought great harm upon itself. It lost its chance of building a solid urban middle class, skilful in industry and able in commerce. The lack is still woefully felt, though all the hampering restrictions began to be removed in the second half of the 18th Century, especially in Warsaw, the restoration and rebuilding of which was begun by the capable Bielinski. From then on things would have gone differently but for the 150-year setback given Poland by the exploitation and restrictions of the occupying powers, especially Russia. In those provinces under the Russian rule the cities and towns simply went to the dogs; no milder words can correctly characterize the blight of the Russian domination.

The result was, and is, that whereas the nations of the west developed a middle class of increasing numbers, value, intelligence, and power, Poland experienced no

such gain and the price it pays for this today is high. Happily all realize the deficiency, and many forces in Poland are now working to correct this defect in the social structure of the nation. Educational, industrial, political, economic agencies and factors are all at work rebuilding Poland's long stagnant or neglected cities and seeking to make up the social deficit of a far too small middle class. Poland is seeking to raise the status of its not large proletariat to that of the middle classes of the west and to industrialize and urbanize its national life and economy. The great constructive leader, Minister Kwiatkowski, says that the cities and industry must be developed to house and employ half the population. Poland is today 70 per cent. rural.

All this bears upon our theme, the Polish tradition, in several ways, so obvious they need be only stated and not expanded. There is no inherited tradition of the city or of a middle class, nor is the life and conduct of the middle class now arising guided to any important degree by its own long-established code, beyond what remains of the mediaeval guild tradition of honest workmanship. This lack tends to correction, for the elements entering into the making up of the new middle class are the more able and ambitious and favoured peasants who have improved their condition and moved up in the social scale, the minor szlachta, and people from the upper classes who have met economic and social adversity. The class is slowly forming, but there is neither tradition of it nor tradition within it, except as it accepts old peasant and szlachta traditions as its own.

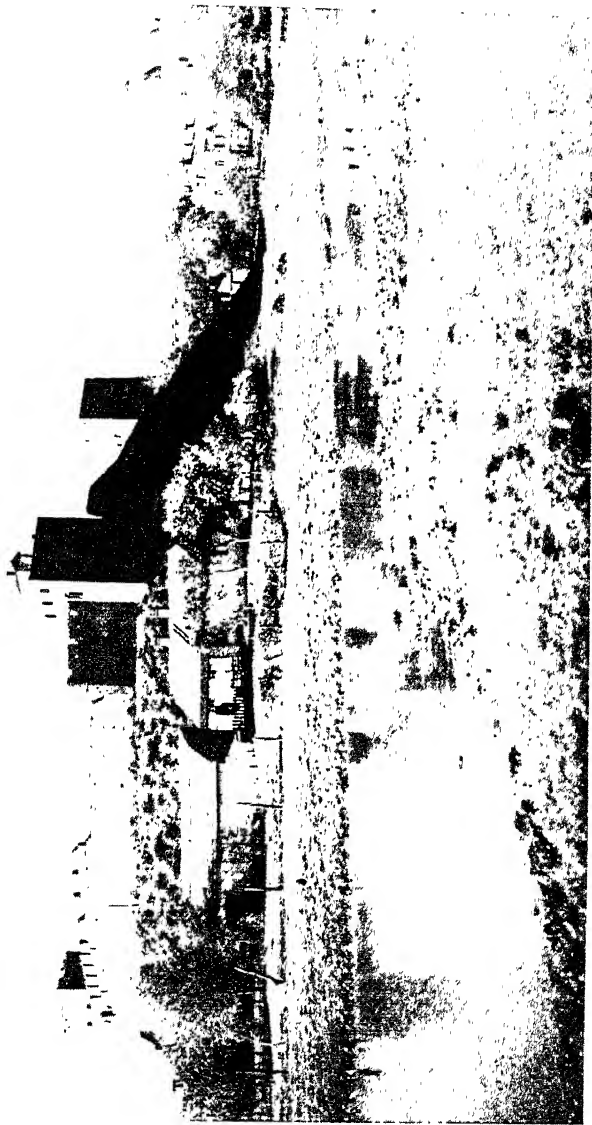
One aspect of the situation is the lack of an established merchant tradition. England has such a tradition, so

has Holland, America, and, far older than any of these, China. Poland is deficient in this respect. In the early 16th Century it was in a way to evolve such a tradition of merchandizing, commerce, and banking, but the szlachta and great lords feared this new class and brought about the downfall both of the merchant and his locus, the city. With a tradition come several other important elements of social life, a code and ethic, taste, prestige, and the inspiration of a vision of possibilities. The very class which could have given business a code of honour, prestige, and inspiration, both abstained from business and hampered it, and for this Poland is the poorer today, both morally and materially.

But the picture is not all dark. It has at least one bright aspect. The typical Pole of the present is not a hard, materialistic, calculating man knowing only advantage, interest, and dividends; thanks to not being too deeply immersed in trade and commerce these four centuries he retains in his character those elements of romance, disinterestedness, and chivalry which make daily contact with him refreshing and stimulating in a hard-boiled day and world. With a growing industrial and commercial tendency he will acquire the talent and formulate the tradition.

#### 6. *The proletariat*

The industrial proletariat is a new element in the Polish picture, and its very recentness prevents there being a tradition about it or its having any special tradition of its own. The modern working man is not identical either with the guild craftsman or with the common labourer of the Middle Ages; he is a product



*Home*

Old Castle at Luck, Poland. Scene of 44 Tartar attacks  
(Pronounced Wootsk)





of the 19th Century industrial revolution. His tradition is yet to be made. But if one is permitted to speculate from the root as to what the fruit will be, the tradition of the Polish working man will be something like this: A tradition of good handcraftship, a combined skill of hand and brain; a tradition of manly self-respect, economical use of resources, and thought for the future; a growing interest in politics, both social and economic, with a tendency toward the left but not communistic; above all, he will regard his class as one open at the top, with a clear road to any higher status for which his mind and personality qualify him, aspiring quite rightly and with reason to see his son become prime minister, distinguished professor, lawyer or engineer, or successful business man, with no class traditions or distinctions to prevent the realization of these dreams. This is neither pious hope nor wishful thinking; it is the expectation naturally arising from the facts of Polish history and character and the realities of today.

#### 7. *The tradition of noblesse oblige*

There is a new and very definite tradition as to the responsibility of the more privileged classes for those having less. During the past hundred years a quite new idealism in this regard has awakened, a sense of social obligation and duty leading many people of the better situated classes to feel deeply the deficiencies and sufferings of their less favoured countrymen. To be sure, the Church had always held before its people their duty toward the sick and the poor, but this charity was individualistic, care for the wreckage of the social order rather than any interest in raising the depressed classes

as a whole. One of the earliest signs of this sense of social responsibility is found in the creation of the Educational Commission in 1773; the next in the liberal constitution of 1791, soon followed by Kosciuszko's freeing of the serfs in 1794. But all these were rather patriotic than humane evidences. If the writer's understanding of the matter is correct it is rather in the early decades of the 19th Century, after the Napoleonic wars and Poland's complete and utter loss of independence, that these nobler sentiments of social service have their roots and origin.

During those years a group of mighty writers, patriotic, romantic, and all of them poets, began to arouse the nation; one of the products of the movement they started was a conviction of the great necessity of awakening, educating, and elevating the peasants and common people if their sense of being Poles was not completely to be lost and their social state become worse and worse. In these present days of post-war Poland one meets the flowering of this movement, an established tradition that those who have more either of goods or of learning must engage in the work of social, religious, and educational organizations and their various enterprises for improving the condition of the poor, the sick, the uneducated, the disadvantaged in any way. The present writer is by no means personally unacquainted with these socially minded people, as for nearly two decades he has been meeting these men and women in various Polish organizations, and knows from experience the motives which lead them to give time and money to work for others.

This tradition of social service has four roots,

the Christian teaching, patriotic devotion, Polish romanticism, and simple humane sentiment. It has with many completely replaced the old tradition of easy acceptance of a low standard of living for the common people. Far more commonly than in England and America one hears such phrases as "he has social spirit," "he is social minded," "he is a social worker," and others similarly denoting devotion to the welfare of people not having much welfare, and it is an established tradition that firms give a share of their annual profits to "social work," a term of wide application. The tradition finds governmental expression in an active and effective Ministry of Social Welfare with a corresponding agency in each province and large city.

#### 8. *The Jews*

Three considerations command the inclusion within this chapter of a special section on the Jews. First, they constitute one-tenth of the population of Poland. Second, there is a very definite Polish tradition with regard to the Jew. Third, the tradition of the Jew in Poland is undergoing serious modification. But one must at once state that a full treatment of the problem of the Jew in Poland is not part of the theme of this book, nor is such treatment possible in brief compass.

How does it happen that within this one state of Europe such a vast number of Jews, 3,500,000, are congregated? The reasons are easily found. In the first place, when in the Middle Ages all the other nations of Europe were persecuting the Jew or driving him beyond their borders, only in Poland did he find refuge and freedom; hence into Poland flocked Jews from all

over the Continent. Second, in Poland the Jews found a definite economic place and function, and consequently prospered and multiplied. And third, in 1804 Russia established the territories it had taken from Poland as a Pale of Settlement into which all the Jews of Russia were compelled to move, with minor exceptions in favour of professional men, a law strictly enforced after 1881. Restored Poland inherited this huge Jewish population, often 30 per cent. to 90 per cent. of the residents of a town or city. In consequence of these three facts there are more Jews in Poland today than in all the rest of Europe combined, and they constitute an enormous social, economic, political, and cultural problem.

A very definite Polish tradition grew up in respect to the Jew. Characteristically Polish, the chief element in this was toleration. The Polish authorities through all history have granted the Jews not only full religious liberty and every protection of the law, but certain additional special rights and privileges, first embodied in that treaty so highly and justly valued by Jews, the Statute of Kalisz, 1246. In pre-war Poland these old Polish Jews were referred to by the Poles as "our Jews," in contrast with the newly arrived Russian Jews. In post-war Poland the government set up by Marshal Pilsudski has been careful of the rights of the Jews, notwithstanding the opposition of persons less tolerant, which of course exist but happily as a small minority.

Next in importance to this liberalism and toleration as a definite fact in the Polish tradition as to the Jew was the wide recognition that the Jews in Poland served definite economic functions, that of middleman, mer-

chant, and banker. Sadly, the general social ethics of the Jew did not emanate from his religion but from his vocation, and are regarded by Poles as lamentably low, with, of course, notable individual exceptions. The intellectual acumen and artistic ability of the Jew are, however, fully recognized by the Pole. Finally, the Jew is traditionally regarded by the Pole as not a creator of wealth, but as a collector of wealth created by the labour of others, and in the worst situations, as an economic parasite living on the Polish social body.

Post-war Poland is now undergoing an important social and economic reconstruction, unlike and unrelated to that going on in any other land, ethically sound and economically wholesome, but a tragedy for the Jews. The tragedy lies not in the intention but in the result.

The Pole of the middle and later ages had neither taste for nor skill in commerce, and the rule of the Church allowing no one to take interest on loans kept him out of banking. These great voids in Polish life were almost entirely filled by Jews, who came in the course of time practically to monopolize small trade, large-scale commerce, and exchange and loan transactions. Bystron says: "The Jew knew how to figure, how to use money, had far-reaching relations with other Jews over the whole world, was energetic and industrious; he filled, therefore, that breach in ancient society which resulted from the lack of properly organized and economically trained townsfolk." Thus with the peasant needing the Jew as a middleman, townsfolk requiring his services as merchant, and the gentry finding him very convenient in all money matters,

he flourished like a green bay tree, became ever more ubiquitous and numerous.

In post-war and independent Poland all this is changing. The peasant is tired of exploitation at the hands of the Jew, is rising against it, and learning to handle his products either directly or through co-operatives. The people of the towns and cities are themselves going into business and urging Christians to deal with Christians. Of the upper classes more and more are engaging in commerce and entering the professions. The result is, that the Jews in Poland, far too numerous on any count, are losing their economic functions to the Poles to whom the land belongs, and are, notwithstanding the vast wealth of their own Jewish upper class, both numerous and rich, beginning to experience unprecedented economic hardships.

Unless other lands having fewer Jews co-operate in receiving Jewish emigrants from Poland their fate in Poland will be a sad one, not because of the cruelty of the Pole, nor his intolerance, for a long history shows him to be neither cruel nor intolerant, but because of the huge Jewish population in Poland, its loss of social function, and its proved utter unassimilability on a large scale into the Polish social structure.

#### 9. *The intelligentsia*

In a closing section we must deal briefly with that characteristically European class of today, the intelligentsia.

As we have seen, Poland has never had a real middle class, and is only now developing one, though all too slowly. Its formation is one of the interesting social phenomena

of Eastern Europe. Between the peasant and the landowner there was a social vacuum, a decidedly deficit situation. Today, as has been said, two forces are operating to create a middle class: the elevation now going on in free and democratic Poland of the more capable of the peasants, working people, minor government employees and people in small trade, and the almost discontinuance of a rich landed or city aristocracy through the enormous losses of the war and the subsequent complete devaluation of all money and of paper securities. Compulsory education, abundant good high schools, inexpensive state universities, freedom and democracy, numerous cultural agencies and institutions, these and the above-mentioned forces co-operate to produce this new social class.

It is not exactly the upper middle class of Western Europe and America; it most certainly, though called the intelligentsia, is not a group of self-conscious would-be superior people. It is a solid, intelligent, democratic, and somewhat idealistic class, availing itself of every cultural opportunity, patriotic, often social-minded, not possessed of much money, and decidedly interesting and worth while. This class, the intelligentsia, are the heirs of the Polish tradition, they are its embodiment, its interpreters, and exponents; they are the ones who, more than any other social class, will pass the tradition on to the next generation of Poles. It is a noble tradition, and one believes it may fare well in their hands.





## CHAPTER THREE

# THE POLISH TRADITION AS TO PERSONAL TRAITS OF MIND AND CHARACTER

The first chapters of this book were preparatory; they introduced the subject and gave its setting. Now comes a group of three chapters, rather the heart of the book, dealing with the Pole in his personal, social, and political aspects. Then follow two chapters containing material very necessary to an understanding of the Pole, one chapter showing the effects of his geographical location upon his national tradition, the last one the ways in which the Polish tradition has been influenced by the contacts of the Poles with other nations.

### 1. *The social equality of all the gentry*

The theory and fact of the social equality of all members of the Polish gentry class was a social phenomenon, but the personal feeling of this equality by a very large per cent. of the members of the class was a trait of the individual Polish mind, and a tradition of which each Pole was vividly, almost aggressively, conscious. This feeling took form in the saying widely current in old Poland, "Szlachcic na zagrodzie-równy wojewodzie," which means "the most humble member of the gentry class living in a cottage is the equal of the governor," the provincial governors of those days being men of great power, wealth, and dignity.

It was this characteristic of the Polish szlachta which

gave such deep satisfaction to the landed gentry of Lithuania and Ruthenia when they were received into the closed circle of Polish szlachta at the time of the Union of Lublin, 1569. Many of them were of very simple origin, and to be admitted into the privileged ruling class of Poland was to them a distinct social promotion and one of the considerations leading them to desire and work for the complete union and merger of their lands with Poland. It was also one of the elements in the Polish tradition giving the Polish nation its surprising assimilative power, its peculiar ability to take members of another racial or national group and make Poles of them, an influence operative all through Polish history.

The fact that the richer magnates warmed none too heartily to this equality mitigated its operation and influence not one whit; it was too established an aspect of the Polish mind, and a small group of men, no matter how rich and powerful, could not cancel it from the Polish tradition.

That this was a characteristic of 16th-Century Poland makes it all the more striking when we think of that era in other lands, Italy of the Medici and Borgias, France of Francis I and the Henrys, Second, Third, and Fourth, Germany of the numerous Catholic and Protestant princes, Austria of the Maximilians and Ferdinand I, Spain of Charles V and Philip II, England of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, lands and days in which democracy was not at home. Certainly we are justified in placing first in our list this strange equality and uniform social and legal level of people really of half a dozen social, cultural, and economic strata. There has been nothing just like

it anywhere else in any civilized land these two thousand years of the Christian era. We speak of it here as a trait of the individual mind. We shall have to return to it in succeeding chapters, for it is obviously not only a personal but a social and a political phenomenon.

## 2. *Tolerance*

Of few of his national traditions is the Pole more proud than of Poland's tradition of tolerance, chiefly in the religious and political spheres, but also as a personal trait of the typical individual. Tolerance is not only "something annoying borne with patience," as Crabb says, it is the broad recognition of the right of an individual or of a group to his or its own opinions and practices, as long as these do not contribute to public immorality or disorder or interfere with the rights of others.

This toleration the Pole does not just assume and let it go at that. He asserts it as a characteristic of his history and proudly points to abundant illustrations. Among Poland's ministers of foreign affairs distinguished in person and abilities was one Count Alexander Skrzynski. On a tour of America in 1925 he gave an address on "America and Polish Democracy" in which he several times referred to this traditional toleration and its operation in Polish history. The cases he cited are known to all Poles; they are not equally well known in other lands. We mention a few in their historical sequence.

(1) When the other nations of Europe were actively persecuting the Jews, especially in the time of the Middle Ages, it was in tolerant Poland that they found refuge.

(2) During the 15th and 16th Centuries Poland increased her territory threefold, her population twofold, and without intimidation, terror, or bloodshed. Active among the forces contributing to this great achievement was her characteristic toleration, which made other racial groups, the Lithuanians and Ruthenians, desire to join Poland; this spirit then assisted in their assimilation into the Polish nation, and so completely was this achieved that many of Poland's greatest heroes come from those stocks, notably Kosciuszko, Mickiewicz, and Pilsudski, and Prince Jeremy Wisniowiecki, whose son became one of Poland's elected kings, 1669.

(3) When the Protestant Reformation developed into a great movement in the 16th Century, in Poland and in Poland only was it given a hearing and allowed to explain itself, take hold, and expand without persecution. Individual bishops desired to institute such persecution but neither the king nor parliament permitted it. "I am not king of your conscience," said Zygmunt August; and he thus addressed parliament: "If this new doctrine (that of Luther) be false, it will disappear on account of its very falsity, and we shall hear no more of it; but if it be true, it will endure from generation to generation." And Jan Zamoyski, greatest Pole of his age and possibly of all ages, Crown Chancellor to a later king, called together his friends who had left the Catholic Church, and said that he would gladly give half his remaining life to see them return to the Church, but that rather than see them return under compulsion he would lay down his life.

This toleration endured until the great Jesuit Counter-Reformation under a bigoted king, Zygmunt III,

1587-1632, turned Poland from its characteristic course of action, with disastrous consequences in every sphere of life.

(4) Another historical illustration, again from the 16th Century and a quotation from Count Skrzynski's address. "When the glare of religious wars shone over Western Europe, when the inhabitants of the greatest nations were occupied in exterminating each other with fire and sword, Poland was living her golden century of liberalism and culture. This, the most brilliant of all her periods, was the fruit of toleration; a toleration which gave absolute freedom to the human conscience at a time when in the west the principle 'whose the reign his the religion' was experiencing its most bloody and shocking triumphs. This distinction is one of which Polish history is justly proud."

(5) All the sad years of the partition period did not extinguish this spirit of toleration. "Our Parliament," says a former prime minister of reborn Poland, "has enacted legislation, in pursuance of provisions in the Constitution, granting equality before the law to the national minority languages spoken in Poland, namely, Ukrainian, White Ruthenian, and Lithuanian. Every Polish citizen is free to speak his own language, and practise his own religion."

(6) The antiquity of this spirit is illustrated by the fact that when Christianity replaced paganism in Poland, the latter was not stamped and burned out, but gradually replaced as the processes of Christian conversion and education spread, a matter of several centuries, and not even then complete. The spirit of intolerance and persecution is not Polish.

(7) Throughout Polish history there has been a peculiar openness and receptibility to foreign ideas, ways, things, words, and persons, even at times a tendency to regard the foreign as better than the local, toleration operating in a broad field. The foreign neither was nor is always better than the Polish, but the open mind is a praiseworthy characteristic. His mind still receptive, the Pole of today appraises more justly his own national values.

(8) The last historical illustration is a very contemporary one. Poland is a country predominantly Catholic, with a Protestant population of only two and a fraction per cent., but in the University of Warsaw there are faculties, not only of Catholic theology, but of Protestant and of Eastern Orthodox; and from the State not only the Catholic Church receives subsidies for the salaries of priests, but also Protestant, Orthodox, Jewish, and Mahometan religious bodies.

As indicated above, there has been one great classic exception to this toleration, the Counter-Reformation introduced into Poland by the Jesuits late in the 16th Century, continued during the 17th, and finally culminating in a disgraceful beheading of ten Protestants in Torun in 1724. All Poles agree in attributing this wave of intolerance to the Jesuits, hold them responsible for it, and repudiate it as an utterly non-Polish and horrible thing. The Jesuits, under several fanatical kings, got possession of the schools and of the training of the sons of the gentry, with disastrous political, moral, intellectual, and social results, happily terminated by the dissolution of the Jesuit Order in 1773. Gradually Polish Catholicism sloughed off its unnatural fanaticism and bigotry, and

became again a true expression of the Polish religious spirit. At its worst, however, religious intolerance and bigotry never reached such extremes either in temper or extent as in Spain, England, Austria, and other European countries.

Hendrik Kraemer, the great Dutch theologian, says that "the art of religious tolerance belongs to the highest arts of life, in all climes and times rarely achieved." True; but it is an ancient art in Poland, and modern also, a cherished national tradition.

One asks himself, what is the basis of this toleration, not only in religion but in all spheres of life? To what shall one attribute it? At times, of course, to sheer indifference and lack of interest. Often it issues from a Polish conviction that force is not an argument. Frequently its basis is simply a traditional belief that the other man has a right to his opinion as long as he does not disturb the peace, or that these views and acts of the other man are not one's business until they intrude into life in a dangerous way. Again, toleration may only indicate a weak devotion to truth. More often it issues from the fact that the Pole is not very self-assertive.

Whatever the explanation, of the fact itself one can give a hundred illustrations. It finds outlet and expression in a wide variety of ways, some of them annoying to a less tolerant foreigner. Near my home in Warsaw is a narrower place in the all-too-narrow sidewalk. Evenings, at the busiest hour of the day as hundreds are returning from work, a lame man sets himself just where the sidewalk is narrowest, thrusts his one leg out into the traffic, covers his face with one hand, and holds his other out for contributions. In what other

great city would such a thing be tolerated? Yet no one here seems to question the right of this man to interfere with their much more legitimate use of the sidewalk.

A good contemporary operation of the Polish tradition of toleration came within my experience several years ago. After a decade of work, the Polish Y.M.C.A., organized after the Great War, decided it needed a statement of the characteristics it wanted its members to possess and cultivate. Naturally the first was that the Polish Y.M.C.A. member should demonstrate his Christian faith by his life, but the third of these "eight characteristics" as proposed by the committee, accepted by the annual convention, and now on the walls of all the Polish Y.M.C.A. buildings and impressed upon the members, is an expression of this national tradition put into the sentence "A Y.M.C.A. man respects the opinions of others." This with the other "commandments," as they are called for convenience, is taught as a moral obligation of the members of the Association.

But of another evidence of their toleration I am very glad: their gracious patience with me as day by day I mangle their highly organized and scientifically accurate Polish language. In seventeen years my Polish has never provoked unkind comments, and I remember with humiliation how we in America laugh at the foreigners' struggle with our irregular English grammar and pronunciation.

Are all Poles tolerant? No, not all, and no Pole always. But the temperature at which his tolerance melts or wilts is as a rule high, and tolerance is one of the great national traditions.

There is, however, a point at which toleration breaks



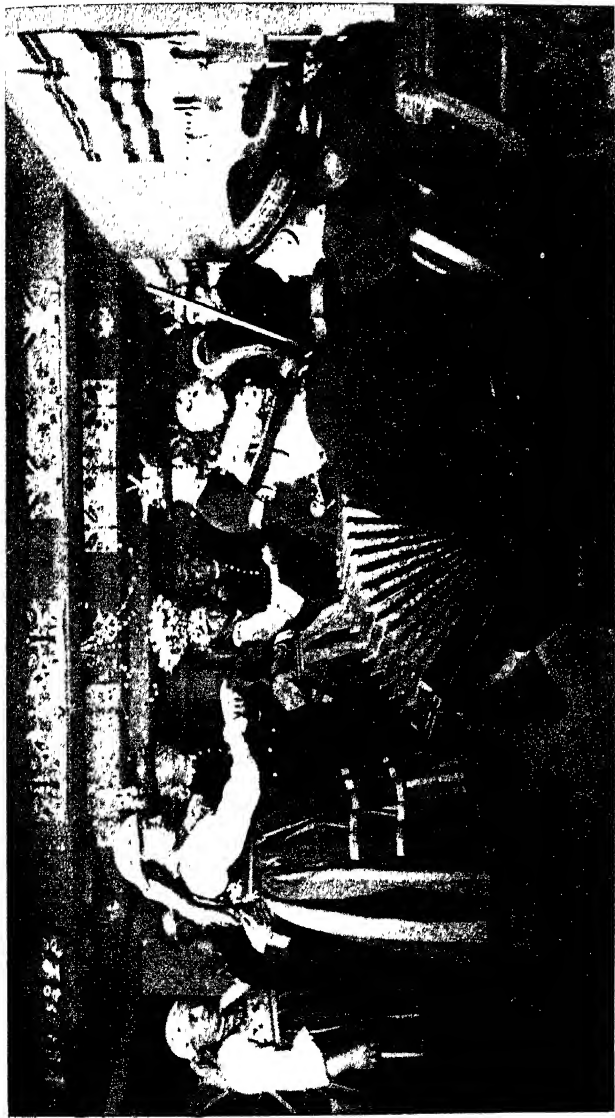
down, both in the individual and in society, and Poles enjoy no complete exemption from this law, strong as their resistance to it is. Toleration endures as long as that which is tolerated does no great harm, or is even suspected as possibly being the truth. It melts before the heat of strong emotion. One is tolerant as long as he is confident of his own personal and social security; when he sees that the consequences of his own toleration may grow into something which will not in turn be tolerant of him, he crushes that growth before he is himself overwhelmed by the fruit of his toleration. Poles, with others, possess this wisdom.

### 3. *Religious and Catholic*

To know the Pole in history and literature or to know him in person on his native soil is to know him as religious and as Catholic. His thorough commitment to his Catholic faith is supported by an equal commitment to a religious interpretation of life, an acceptance of religion so natural and general as to be a national characteristic. It is one of the strongest of all the national traditions that to be a Pole is to be a Catholic. As Professor Arthur Coleman says: "For nearly a thousand years his Roman faith has been one of the marks of a Pole's identity as a Pole."

My own knowledge of the Polish people has led me to divide this fact into two elements, as indicated above: the Pole's natural predisposition to religion and his age-long complete giving of himself to the Catholic faith.

Before going further into these facts and illustrating them it might be well to state their limits. To assert that the Pole is religious is not to assert that he is a saint;



*Photo by P. H. H.*

Peasant wedding in the Lowicz district. Bride in centre-background with high flower headdress



to state the fact of his faith is not to proclaim his general moral superiority, though there are indeed areas of life in which I consider him rather superior morally; to say that all Poles are Catholics is not to say that there are not thousands who are not practising Catholics, weak in their faith and irregular in the performance of their religious duties or even completely negligent of them. Yet notwithstanding these limitations upon the statement, and possibly others, it remains as clearly visible facts that religion is thoroughly at home among Poles, is widely observed as a vitally important phase of life, and that the general atmosphere of Polish life is religious, reverent, believing, and traditionally Catholic. Being neither a Pole nor a Catholic, I am reporting observations, not predilections.

This general tradition of the place of religion in life and attitude toward it finds both support and expression in a number of ways, which, I believe, are best understood if seen against the background of understanding of the deep emotional tone of Polish religious life. You go to church in some lands and *see* religion; you go to church in Poland and *feel* it. Within the church itself, crowded to the doors during Mass, or scattered here and there with people at prayer during other hours of the day, you feel the profoundly impressive religious atmosphere of the building; within the congregation, even though they may be strangers to each other, as in a great city, you feel the actual emotional tie which binds the people together. As they march in religious processions, bow before sacred shrines, sing their lovely Christmas carols, participate in services of song, kneel in almost breathless awe, adoration, or reverence at the elevation

of the Host during Mass, these waves or tides of emotion rise and spread with such power as to communicate themselves even to one of a different faith. See all that now follows in this account not as dry and ancient forms but as warm, living, thrilling life, with tone, quality, and heart. Often formal and thoughtless, no doubt, but only slumbering and easily wakened into flame.

The packed churches, summer and winter, have been mentioned; and the great religious processions on holy days, the vast throngs marching to places of pilgrimage with songs and banners, and the reverent kneeling before such sacred pictures as the Holy Virgin of the Ostra Brama in Wilno and of Czestochowa. These are only a few of the many evidences of religious feeling and sentiment. Wayside crosses, images, and shrines in the form of little chapels are seen everywhere, and before these many men doff their hats and the women cross themselves, or stop to kiss the feet of the figure of Jesus. Crosses consecrate many a field. Outside of the sophisticated cities the salutation on road and path is "Let Jesus Christ be praised," to which the greeted one replies "From the ages to the ages," the same greeting often being used upon entering the house of a friend, or by the husband as he returns from his day's work. Sacred pictures, especially of the Holy Virgin, are in every home; the cross is on the walls of the school-room; many buildings other than those especially religious, and private homes, are blessed by the priests in impressive ceremonies; Christmas carols are sung by home groups with unembarrassed depth of feeling, and when sung in gatherings everybody knows both words and tunes; one feels that in the singing the heart is

indeed open to God. Thousands of persons take their fully prepared Easter breakfast to the church the day before Easter to be blessed, while in smaller parishes the priest visits the homes on this errand.

If these statements seem to idealize the Pole or Polish life, let me remind the reader that no attempt is made in this book to describe the entire population, nor to elaborate exceptions; the intention is rather to get the general feel of life in Poland and to set forth the Polish tradition in clear analysis. I am by no means blind to Polish faults, but these are not the theme of my book. The tradition of a nation is its accumulated ideals, loyally held as valid for all, and reasonably expressed in life.

In connection with this emotional tone of Polish religious life, it is in place to mention that a distinguished modern Polish historian has called attention to the scarcity of sects in Poland as an evidence that with the Poles religious conviction is not deep on the intellectual side. Had Polish religion been deeper in thought and theory, he believes, groups with strongly specialized convictions and sense of revelation would have arisen and broken off from the main body. That this has not happened is in no small measure due to the fact that Polish religion is more largely emotion or sentiment than thought. But it would be a great mistake to conclude from this that these sentiments are lightly held, or that such a religious foundation is less secure than an intellectualistic one. Love also is a sentiment, and so are charity, loyalty, and patriotism, but they are none the less powerful forces, and, is it not so?, more profoundly satisfying than convictions.

The first point of this section being that Poles are traditionally religious, the second is that they are traditionally Catholic; historically so since A.D. 966, but traditionally so by strong sentiments of attachment to the Catholic faith. It suits their temperament; the warmth, colour, pageantry, and ceremony of the Catholic worship, the certainty of the affirmation of its dogmas, the sympathy and comfort of the Catholic view of the Holy Virgin, respond exactly to the demands of something in their Slavic nature. Thus psychologically. Historically the Catholic Church and faith have played so large a role in holding the members of the nation together spiritually during the long years of their political separation, and in reinforcing their national spirit and private morale whilst they were suffering cruel repression and persecution, that it has endeared itself to the whole nation, even to thousands of the middle and upper classes who feel no special attraction to its theology and worship. The Catholic faith has served the nation well and reaped a reward of love, devotion, and esteem.

To be a Catholic also became a symbol of being a Pole. To the west and north the Germans were Lutherans; to the east the Russians were Eastern Orthodox; in opposition to these faiths pressing in upon and pressed upon the Pole, his very spirit of self-preservation made him cling to something else, and to be a Pole and to be a Catholic became interchangeable terms, an expression of group loyalty.

It is important to observe also that in emphasizing that he is a Catholic the Pole is laying stress upon the fact that he belongs to the west and to the western world, not

to the east. He is not attracted by what lies east of him, and finds his Catholic affiliation a clear means of distinctly disassociating himself from this eastern and orthodox civilization. Then, very deep down in his racial memory lies the fact that it was the Catholic priest and monk who during the 11th, 12th, and 13th Centuries were the bearers of western civilization to the Poles, the bringers of enlightenment, of a higher culture than that of old pagan Poland, and of the Christian faith. Thus though he may dislike some particular policy of the Vatican, may find some aspect of the Church not just what he would prefer, though he may be weak in his faith and negligent of his religious duties, of his basic Catholic identification and commitment there can arise no doubt in his mind.

The Reformation made a great appeal to the educated Poles of the 16th Century, but not on theological grounds. The clergy and the nobles clashed over tithes, and the vast lands and estates of the Church paid no taxes, two economic grounds for dissatisfaction. Bishops and abbots enriched themselves and their relations at the expense of the Church and in a way at the cost of the nobles and the State. The Church itself needed a purge, financial, ethical, moral, in about all its branches. Thus the seeds of the Reformation fell on prepared ground and took root. But the very fact that in Poland it was a social, political, and economic movement and not the expression of deep doctrinal conviction gave it shallow roots. The division of the reform movement into three sects, Calvinist, Lutheran, and Arian, weakened it internally and it fell an easy prey to its own weakness, to lack of deep appeal to the Slav temperament,



and to the Jesuit counter-reformation. Further, it never made any appeal whatever to the peasants, by nature conservative, and liking the colour and ceremony, altars, music, incense, and processions of the great churches, so strong in comparison with the more barren and austere Protestant faith, devoid of these things, and of saints, miracles, holidays, shrines, and mystical worship. Furthermore they were oppressed by the nobles and saw no good reason for accepting their new religion.

The Protestant Reformation served useful purposes, however. It brought about urgent reforms; it put the Catholic clergy on their mettle to do better; and it advertised Poland as a free land as compared with Germany, Bohemia, Italy, France, and England of the 16th Century. It demonstrated the Polish spirit of toleration, notwithstanding isolated acts of persecution. It stimulated the native intellectuality of the Polish upper classes, of which we shall tell presently, leading them to think deeply, to speak, write, print, and discuss in defence of or opposition to the new faith. It convinced the Pole of his permanent Catholicism. It made the Polish language the current written language of culture, displacing the prevalent Latin.

A striking aspect of the Catholic faith and tradition in Poland is the nationwide love and worship of the Madonna. Protestants are often repelled by this, feeling that Mary is receiving that which belongs only to Jesus. But upon longer acquaintance with and deeper study of this matter even the Protestant understands its basis and justification, and the place the Holy Virgin plays in Polish thought and life. One may easily understand, appreciate, and sympathize with this beautiful idea of the

Madonna without necessarily accepting it and receiving it into his own life and thought. Personally I consider it an enrichment of the mind. Feeling thus, maybe I can in some real though inadequate way state the place of the Holy Virgin, the proper Catholic term, in the Polish tradition.

My own introduction came thus. On one of my early visits to Krakow I dropped in to visit a distinguished professor of biology, one of the foremost scientists of Europe, a great expert in his special field. Something led our talk into a discussion of the Madonna, and my friend remarked that any idea which had so profoundly moved mankind for so many ages must have something very true in it. My deep respect for this scholarly man led me to consider then and ever since just what that "something" is. To the Pole the Holy Virgin means these things:

The idea of devoted and pure Motherhood, both in its human sense and as supplementing the idea of God as Father. Fatherhood does not exhaust the full idea of the parenthood of God. Those who know real motherhood desire to read into their thoughts of God the attributes of motherhood also. The Madonna supplies this deficiency with rich fulfilment.

The idea of noble and virtuous womanhood realized in the flesh and in history, an embodiment of all that is good in woman.

The idea of an intercessor with God through His loved Son, Jesus. God is remote; Jesus even is far above man. Mary is nearer the human comprehension and grasp, kind, approachable by man, more real and visible.

In Poland the pictures and figures of Jesus represent

Jesus as suffering on the cross or bearing the cross in great suffering to Calvary. It is not an attractive representation. The Madonna, on the other hand, is all that the art of great painters and sculptors can bring forth in beauty and loveliness. No wonder the devout worshipper is drawn to one so lovely as the Holy Virgin of the Ostra Brama.

To the Pole Mary is sanctified by her relation to Jesus, and her part in the Ministry of Redemption. Jesus being divine, Mary is the Mother of God, a title dating back to the General Council of Ephesus, A.D. 431. But I think the theological aspects of the Holy Virgin are absent or secondary to the average Polish worshipper. She is the Madonna not of dogma but of experience. Her salutation is "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." How much she means to the troubled and toiling peasant, to the tempted student, to little children singing before her shrine in May, to the devout priest, to countless others in Poland one must see to understand. Perhaps to the simple the mind does not go beyond Mary, but many an intellectual Pole would endorse the words of Cardinal Gibbons, "There is not a grain of incense offered to Mary which does not ascend to the throne of God Himself."

These are vital facts in the Polish tradition. Long-fellow could well have written of Poland:

This is indeed the blessed Mary's land,  
Virgin and mother of our dear Redeemer!  
All hearts are touched and softened at her name,  
Alike the bandit with the bloody hand,  
The priest, the prince, the scholar, and the peasant;  
The man of deeds, the visionary dreamer  
Pay homage to her as one ever present.

But now we must turn to a great contrast, or at least an unexpected phase of Poland's Catholic faith. Poland is not especially pro-Rome. Every Pole who knows the history of his country knows that in many a national crisis Rome sided with Poland's enemies or definitely used her influence against Poland's obvious interests. Again, Rome's often striking indifference to Poland, in the past, is hard to explain. To be sure, Poland gave Rome no end of trouble. The Poles often chafed under the authority of the clergy and of Rome. It was only the great diplomatic skill of Commendoni, Papal delegate to Poland, which around the year 1565 kept Poland from breaking with Rome. The democratic and liberty-loving Pole did not take to Roman domination.

This does not mean that there is any great or general desire to separate from Rome and have a National Catholic Church. There is a real attachment for Rome, and it is rather strong. But Poles who have been ruled from St. Petersburg, Vienna, and Berlin do not now care to be ruled from Rome. They want to belong to the great international Catholic Church and be good Catholics, but within Poland's borders the Church must be Polish.

The Reformation in the 16th Century shook the Catholic tradition in Poland; the Swedish wars in the 17th Century oddly enough and by direct reaction restored it, and it has never again been imperilled or in doubt. In 1655 a Swedish Protestant army invaded Poland and conquered half its territory, including Poznan, Warsaw, and Krakow. Finally at Czestochowa, as told in Henry Sienkiewicz's historic novel, *The Deluge*, the invaders met their first defeat. The Swedes made the

great mistake of trying not only to conquer Poland, but to impose upon it their Protestant faith, and the Poles, opposing the latter even more than the former, were at Czestochowa roused to desperate resistance and final victory by the cry "For our faith and our country." Then indeed to be a Pole was to be a Catholic.

During the invasion some of the Protestants in Poland helped the Swedes, bringing into sharp outlines the oneness of patriotism and the Catholic faith. In coincidence with the Swedish war was a war with Orthodox Russia and one with Mahometan Turkey. These were the final and effective influences in establishing the identity of the terms Pole and Catholic.

But here Poland's traditional tolerance and assimilative quality come into play. Poles of Protestant faith, of which there are one or two hundred thousand, and citizens of German ancestry but now thoroughly Polonized, are by no means discriminated against. On the contrary, many of them are highly honoured citizens. They are not only elected to both houses of Parliament, but are represented in every Cabinet, chosen not because of their Protestant faith, of course, but notwithstanding it, and because they are good Poles and capable men. The President is a loyal Catholic, but he has chosen at least three Protestant prime ministers during his twelve years of office. There is little bigotry in Poland except in the Poznan area, where it is easily understandable as a natural reaction against the hundred years' attempt of the Lutheran Germans to de-nationalize and Germanize the Poles.

#### 4. *Idealism*

We take up now, in this and the two following sections, three qualities of the Polish mind and character which constitute a related group, idealism, romanticism, and individualism, each an important element in the traditional idea the Pole has of himself and also in the idea others have of him.

No few informed foreign writers regard idealism as the outstanding characteristic of the Pole, while Poles themselves consider this attitude toward life, events, and material things as a proud part of their national tradition. The term is rather broad, both in its direct meaning and in its implications, and somewhat vague; its expressions in life, however, are real enough. By definition the word means "the habit of forming ideals and of striving after their realization," or a poetic and romantic outlook. To the Pole it means, at different times, certain very definite reactions to life, and these are easily stated by one knowing the Polish mentality.

In one group of instances traditional Polish idealism means the foreseeing of a better state of things, and concrete though not always worldly-wise efforts to bring that state into being. Closely related to this is a tendency to prefer to do a thing fully and wholly and properly rather than to compromise with reality and the possible. The Pole is a poor compromiser; in no aspect of life is he a more confirmed idealist than in his dislike of compromise. Another expression of Polish idealism is a tendency of some to live in a world of the mind and not to be too much occupied with this world of reality. This, of course, is part of the general Slavic predisposition to introspection, to be occupied with the soul.

Closely related to this last expression of idealism is a relative minor interest in material things and considerations and a strong attachment to ideal values. All through his long history the Pole has shown that he values liberty above life. He prizes personal honour and dignity above financial advantage. Again, living somewhat in the world of the mind, inadequate material conditions of life trouble him less than they do more western people. His spirit is not dependent upon his body. Good roads are not an indispensable condition of existence. To lose one's fortune is not to lose all, and war-impoorished Poles have carried into their reduced circumstances all the graces and qualities of spirit which marked them as people of station in the days of their affluence. Their culture has proved itself spiritual, not material. This is applied idealism.

The Polish imagination is fired, perhaps too easily, by idealistic proposals. Did ever subject nation launch more hopeless uprisings than those against Russia in 1830 and 1863, or struggle for liberty with less likelihood of attaining it? This was the amazing thing in pre-war Pilsudski, hard realist, flaming idealist, working for the poor, the oppressed, for the freedom of his nation, often one lone man against gigantic, colossal Russia. Scattered here and there over Europe and over the years were thousands of such idealists, when there seemed so little hope of their ideal being realized. The Polish tradition of idealism is soundly documented: in Siberian mines, Russian prison graveyards, in records of bold and dashing adventure for national liberation.

Joy in ideas and in thinking is another phase of Polish idealism. It is this which makes the Pole such a

stimulating and entertaining companion, with responsive imagination and a fondness for thinking through.

Again, Polish idealism means, in the splendid words of Professor Roman Dyboski, "an unshaken faith in the ultimate triumph of spiritual forces over the brute reign of material power." This faith had to endure long, over a century; but it was very real, as I know from men of my own age who held to that faith through long and dark days before they saw it justified, as history finally did indeed justify it.

Yet one more point. In a long and extensive experience with Poles of all classes I have found them hard people to praise. Not that they do not like and respond to appreciation; but when one seeks to praise them for an achieved success they hesitate to accept praise; the ideal achievement they had in their mind seems to rise in their thoughts and dwarf what they have accomplished; their attitude often seems to say, "Maybe it was good, but it was not near as good as I wanted it to be or as it ought to have been."

There is just now something of a conscious reaction from this idealism, a feeling among Poles that they must be "realistic." "Nie realny," not real, is the Pole's present-day comment upon and condemnation of unrealizable or doubtful projects, such as an item in a budget or a proposed plan. One hears the phrase everywhere. The Pole has learned that he must be real, practical, have regard to stubborn facts, submit things to the test of history and of experience, to a clear foresight of consequences; he demands to see the way, wants supporting data, and evidence of a good outcome. But this contemporary temper is only a brake upon his



wheels, not an extinguishing of the fires of his traditional idealism.

### 5. *Romanticism*

The romanticism of the Pole is idealistic rather than sentimental, if by sentimental is meant something weak and soft. Polish romanticism has all through the ages led Polish soldiers, poets, painters, patriots, into high and dangerous adventure, military, political, literary, social, of a quality difficult, sacrificial, self-emptying. A few illustrations make it all very clear.

In 1683 an overwhelming army of Turks under the gifted Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa moved into Austria and besieged Vienna. The Emperor fled in despair and sent messages in various directions imploring help, and among others one was sent to King Jan Sobieski of Poland. It was not to Poland's political and material interest to intervene, but with characteristic Polish romantic chivalry Sobieski hastily summoned an army and rapidly moved on Vienna at the head of his invincible cavalry. He was given supreme command over the combined Austrian, Bavarian, and Saxon troops, broke the lines of the Turkish besiegers, leading his Polish troops in person, and then pushed the flying Turkish soldiers far to the east. With his army he returned to Poland, richer by some of the goods left by the retreating Turks and great fame, nothing else. The thing has no parallel in European history. It was poor politics, but very romantic and Polish.

Our second illustration is from the 19th Century. The failure of the peasants to take part in the two great Polish efforts to shake off the Russian yoke brought

forcefully to the educated Poles of the last quarter of the 19th Century the necessity of bridging the gulf between peasants and the upper classes. To point a way to a solution of this problem three talented young Krakow artists and literary men, Rydl, Tetmeyer, and Wyspiański, all destined to be leaders of their nation through their writing, painting, and patriotic endeavours, married peasant girls from near Krakow. This romantic project ended only in negative results and even in disaster; it came to nothing. But it illustrates the sacrificial, patriotic, and somewhat impractical nature of Polish romanticism.

These two illustrations must suffice where many are available. In older and happier days this romantic spirit expressed itself in love of ceremony, pomp, fine dress, expensive jewels. Poles on their journeys abroad, as the delegation in Vienna in 1513 and in Paris in 1573, astounded the Court of those capitals with the richness and elegance of their costume. Later centuries were to temper exuberance with suffering, and to turn the romantic Polish spirit into channels of patriotism, to make it grave and sober; but never calculating; always idealistically devoted.

In literature this spirit gave birth to Poland's three greatest poets, Mickiewicz, Krasinski, and Slowacki, writing in the second quarter of the 19th Century, and Henry Sienkiewicz, the world-renowned novelist of our own day, all producing works which did more to support and form the national character than anything except the sacred Scriptures. How inadequately we state their services to their nation when we call them merely poets and novelists! Their services are unique among

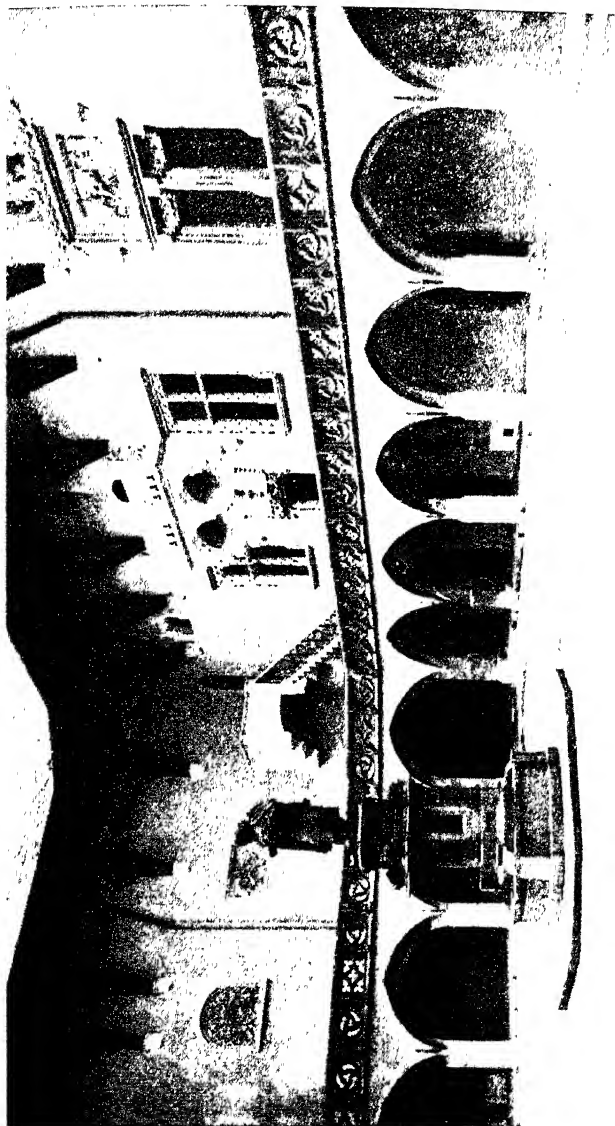
the nations. The romanticism of these writers is intensely patriotic, Christian, and social, willing to pay a large price for a spiritual value, devoted to liberty, freedom, and the welfare both of the individual and of humanity. One of its outgrowths was the strange Messianism well known to all students of Polish history, which taught that as Poland was the crucified nation, it must have some definite saving mission for mankind.

Positivism had its sufficient influence toward the end of the last century, but it never effaced nor seriously altered the ancient Polish tradition of romanticism.

#### 6. *Individualism*

Heard more than any other comment the Poles make upon themselves is this, "We are individualists." The words are meant as a simple statement of fact; sometimes as explaining, though not necessarily justifying, an act or situation, sometimes as an enunciation of the final and ultimate reason why they dislike centralized control and dictators, at other times the reason they as Poles are less influenced by vogues and styles than are some people; once in a while the words have in their tone a slight ring of pride. Basically they mean that the Pole will do his own choosing as to what he will accept or do, and all who care to deal successfully with the Pole orient themselves to this national tradition of individualism. It is indeed not a theory but a very active fact.

What is its source? Is it selfish disregard for others and contempt of their interests and opinions? Such a hypothesis does not fit the facts nor does it explain the phenomenon. This national characteristic more likely



Court of University Library at Krakow. Statue of Copernicus  
who was a Pole and studied there



rests upon a real appreciation of the value of the individual, a high evaluation of individuality and of the worth and dignity of the person. Yours as well as his. For the Pole is slow to try to force his opinion on others; his tolerance is as real as his individualism. He is quite willing to grant to others that which he requests for himself, a right to be a person in the full sense of that word. He has what one might almost call an ethical, certainly a traditional, inhibition against forcibly crossing the frontiers of another's life. Just as he demands, he also grants independence of opinion. The traditions of individualism and of tolerance are equally authoritative.

This characteristic and tradition has a very practical usefulness in the present world of politics; it makes the Pole loathe equally communism and fascism, any denying of the worth and dignity and freedom of the individual. To the Pole the rights of the individual must be duly regarded by the State, a fact his history amply illustrates. See the things he rejected, fearing State tyranny: a titled nobility; a hereditary monarch; a family reigning in perpetuity; a standing army; all centralization of government. Note how for centuries he has equally despised the subservient mind of the Muscovite gentry, the herd mind of the Germans, and the bureaucratic Austrian, and how he has resisted discipline and regimentation either by State or Church these six or seven hundred years.

Note also that most individualistic of all constitutional provisions, the absurd and dangerous "liberum veto" of the 17th and 18th Centuries which for all acts of Parliament required "full, free, and unanimous assent," and which made it possible for one man to rise in

Parliament and by simply saying "I object," cause not only the failure of the bill under discussion, but the dissolution of Parliament and the cancelling of all bills passed by that house to date; a constitutional right used several times, and always with disastrous results. Its one basis was Polish individualism, I demanding my rights and equally granting you yours. To the Pole of those centuries the individual was sovereign to the State, and today he finds it no easy matter to adjust his internal politics to the demands created by communism on the east and fascism on the west. To the Pole the State exists to protect and facilitate the life and occupations of the individual, not to use him as cannon fodder and the instrument of dictatorship. To be sure he is glad to die for his country if need be, but that is his desire, for a country he loves, not for a dictator he has to obey.

The early Polish constitution, as Jan Zamoyski pointed out in 1573, granted the individual three basic rights:

1. To be a member of the Republic, which was an association of free and noble citizens.
2. To be under only those laws which he himself, as a class, passed.
3. To elect the king.

Some greatly abused and exaggerated these rights, held themselves free from taxes, obedience to the authorities, and the judgments of the courts. At times they were not far from anarchy due to their excessive individualism, or in open rebellion. Later a hundred and fifty years of subjection to Austria, Prussia, and Russia taught them

their lesson, the necessity of restricting and restraining individualism, and today Poland is an orderly and reasonably disciplined democracy, but the tradition of individualism remains and, though not unduly operative in public life, is a distinct characteristic of private and social relations.

It is this individualism which, some think, gave birth to such original scientists as Copernicus and Madame Curie, and provided the soil from which sprang innumerable great men in the fields of painting, literature, music, and scholarship. It most assuredly contributes to that known fact, the distinct personality of the Pole and his interesting individuality.

But it contributes to ineffectiveness. Groups are slow in reaching decisions. There is a lack of national cohesion and unity. At election time one has seen over thirty national parties contending for power. Dissatisfied elements too easily break off from a larger body. Things which ought to be settled go unsettled. Time is wasted getting unanimity under circumstances in which a majority vote should be willingly accepted as decisive and command the loyal assent and co-operation of the minority. A man whose advice is not followed stiffly says, "I see I am not needed," and withdraws, not knowing how to submit his personality to the group will and keep on friendly co-operating.

However, in a day and on a continent in which individualism is widely repressed and personality denied, we can forgive the Pole these faults; they inconvenience no one but himself, and help preserve a remnant of a quality now being widely stamped out in other large European lands. The assets of the quality are larger in



the balance than the liabilities, and make the Pole a person, not a robot. When great national crises arise the Poles quickly unite and do the necessary thing, as their turning back of the Bolshevik invasion of 1920 amply demonstrated. They will react in the same way if another and similar occasion presents itself.

### 7. *Love of the soil*

Is it a consequence of this individualism that Poles so love life on the land? It is hard to say, for though the Pole infinitely prefers the soil to the city, he is, though individualistic, also gregarious; the manor-houses of the upper classes have always been great centres of social life, and the peasants, instead of living in scattered farm-houses as in America, cluster together in hamlets, their farms often existing as long strips of land back of their houses which border the one street of the village.

Be the cause what it may, the traditional form of Polish life is rural, agricultural. The culture of other lands, ancient and modern, was in many instances moulded by the cities, says a high Polish authority, but not that of Poland, especially in the 16th Century when Polish culture really found itself and reached its first splendour. Krakow, to be sure, played a notable role in establishing the Polish tradition, but the great rural estates were of far more national and social significance so far as the typical Polish pattern of life was concerned.

Even today, after all the industrialization and urbanization of life during the 19th and 20th Centuries, 61 per cent. of the population of Poland derive their living directly from agriculture, and 67 per cent. live in villages

and in the open country. The attitude of the Pole toward the city, however, both historically and today, indicates more than do the statistics the strength of the agricultural tradition. Every family of any means whatever is somehow or other connected with a "majatek," a landed estate, and to the manor-house, small or magnificent, the members of the family return for Christmas, Easter, special days, and summer vacations. The city Pole is a man from the land come to town. His heart and love are in the country.

During earlier centuries this worked great harm to the cities, whose inhabitants were naturally proportionately less Polish and more German or Jewish as a result. In these cities the landed gentry took no interest and even, by their large majorities in Parliament, practically disenfranchised them. They went there as seldom as possible and only for urgent reasons. Real Polish life was lived only in the manor-houses. The landed gentry grew or imported all they used. Social life, economic, religious, political life, were all rural. The typical Polish occupations, both economic and social, became those of the rich landed gentry. Social gatherings, feasts, house parties, all these were of a country estate character, as of course were the sports and games of the men.

Out of this environment came the traditions of old Poland, the idea of what a noble does and does not do, a certain aloofness from commerce and business affairs, attitudes toward life, habits of hospitality on a grand scale, superb horsemanship, skill with firearms, that lack of concentration which has always been Poland's weakness, and, above all, a passionate love of the soil, the soil itself. The English understand this; Americans

rarely do. The very ground he walks on is loved by and sacred to the Pole. It is his mother, his life.

Well, that soil has long been his. Recent excavations at Biskupin reveal that this soil has been Slav for several thousand years at least, and it has been Polish since the earliest dawn of tradition. Before the Norsemen invaded France and founded Normandy, before Angles, Saxons, and Danes moved over into England, a thousand years before Columbus discovered America, centuries before Charlemagne, the ancestors of the Poles were at home on this their own land. The Pole's love of his soil has long and deep roots.

This agrarian tradition is reflected in the current Polish proverbs and sayings of which there are uncounted hundreds. Polish proverbs are proverbs of the land, have to do with such things as one sees and learns on the farm and the large estate. "Don't call the wolf out of the forest," "He has eaten bread from more than one oven," "Don't get into a wagon without reins, into a boat without an oar, or on to a horse without a spur," "Woe to the little chicken that the hawks hunt," "The dog in the hay will neither himself eat nor let the cow eat," and so on *ad infinitum*. One of our maids had a proverb for every incident of the day, and they were all of agrarian origin. In their original Polish many of these sayings have a rhyme, rhythm, and balance quite lost in the translation. "Walk on water on St. Barbara's Day and you'll walk on ice at Christmas" has a beautiful swing in Polish. "A good weapon and a good wife, that's happiness enough" is a neat rhyme.

This traditional love of the soil has today a far wider foundation than would be provided just by the land-

owning gentry. During the 19th Century the peasant himself increasingly became a landowner; Dr. Roman Dyboski is my authority for the statement that "even before the war two-thirds of the arable land of Poland was in the hands of the peasants."

The social recreations and accomplishments of many of the men of Poland originate in this rural life; hunting, horsemanship, dancing, and the use of weapons, both firearms and the sabre. Poland abounds in game the year round, and consequently, in a civilization in which almost all men are in some way related to the soil, hunting is and has been for centuries one of the great national sports. As to horsemanship, Poles have for ages grown up on horseback, from which fact derives the superb Polish cavalry and Poland's pre-eminence in horsemanship in international meets. The horse itself is something of a tradition in Poland. All Poles love horses, not only to ride, but for what they are. In life, in history, and extensively in art the horse here plays a large role. It is no accident or chance that Poland today has more horses than any country in Europe, except Russia, about 4,000,000 at this writing, and also exports more, 20,000 a year, especially blooded stock, notwithstanding the appalling loss of all sorts of live-stock during the six long years of war, 1914-1920. Polish horse-breeding is on a high level. All these things are related phenomena: love of the land, a rural gentry civilization, fondness for horses, good horsemanship, superb cavalry, and export breeds of horses, facts and traditions closely akin.

As to dancing, who does not know the Polish dances originating both in the palaces of the great magnates and

the humble social gatherings of the peasants, the stately Polonaise and the lively Mazurka, to which must be added several not known abroad, the mad Oberek and the spirited Krakowiak. We foreigners watch them whirl and whirl and wonder how they can keep it up. It's all part of the national tradition, and its ancestry is not urban but agrarian.

To know how to shoot and to know how to fence, these are accomplishments of a nation of soldiers recruited at need, up to about A.D. 1600, chiefly from the gentry, later increasingly, and today in the very nature of things, also from the peasants. A young Pole and I were talking about hunting when he observed, "Have you noticed that the ruling classes always know how to shoot?" Then, after a silence he added with a sly smile, "I wonder if they can shoot because they are nobles, or whether they are nobles because they can shoot?" It was a whimsical idea, and possibly not without a historical basis.

Love of the soil, hunger for land, fondness for the kind of life the open country makes possible, these are indeed potent elements in the Polish tradition.

#### 8. *The knightly tradition*

Thirty-odd years ago, when Poland as a state did not exist and of books about Poland there were almost none, an American journalist spent a year among the Poles, wrote a series of articles about the land and people he had been studying, and then collected his articles into a book with the title, *Poland, the Knight among the Nations*. The characterization was inspired by those words of Victor Hugo in which the great Frenchman referred to

Poland as "the knight of civilization." This happened to be the only book about Poland I could find in my city library when I was asked to go to that country many years ago.

With this as a correct description of Poland, as my long residence here and my study of Polish history and culture have convinced me, I wish to couple a comment made to me by the owner of a book store in Jugoslavia of whom I was purchasing a map of his city. He asked me where I was from, and when I said "From Poland," he spontaneously replied, "That is a very noble nation."

Knightliness and nobility are potent elements in the Polish tradition, amply illustrated both in national history and in private life. Knightly character, both national and personal, must include the qualities of bravery, endurance, nobility, chivalry, spirit of *noblesse oblige*, courtesy, and the use of force, not for self or national aggrandizement, but only in the defence of one's own, his country and countrymen, or of a worthy cause. It would be absurd to pretend that the Polish or any other people had always exemplified these qualities either in their national or in their private acts, but it requires only a little knowledge of the history of this land and people and no great experience of their ways to justify one in feeling that they have abundantly lived up to their tradition and worthily represent it today.

How to set this forth in a few words is a problem, for we need to get the cumulative effect of repeated demonstrations of knightliness, chivalry, and nobility of action during nine hundred years of written history. Their first king, crowned in A.D. 1000, was called "The Brave," and both the scope and the nature of his reign

justified the title, which obviously was not won alone, but only at the head of a brave people. In 1241 the first of a four-and-a-half-century series of devastating Tartar hordes swept over Poland, to be met and turned back at Liegnitz by Polish knights led by their Prince Henry the Pious, who heroically gave his life on that field of battle.

The next great act of Polish chivalry was the defeat of the invading Teutonic Knights at the battle of Plowce in 1332. Again these usurpers were soundly defeated at the battle of Grunwald, or Tannenberg, in 1410. Different in character, but equally chivalrous and magnificent in its spirit, was the beautiful Treaty of Horodlo, 1413, deepening the ties of Poland and Lithuania, which treaty I have elsewhere characterized as the most Christian international document ever written, a veritable continuation of the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians.

We arrive at 1444, when Wladyslaw III, King of Poland, leading the combined Christian armies against the Turks, far down in Bulgaria, gave his life for the cause of the Cross against the Crescent on the battlefield of Varna. We then pause a moment to see Stefan Batory, Poland's greatest king, a Hungarian by birth, his armies led by the famous Pole Jan Zamoyski, turning back the westward advance of Ivan the Terrible at Pskow in 1581. Next we mention Jan Sobieski's defeat of the invading Turk at the powerful fortress of Chocim, 1673, and then his destroying the Turkish invader before the walls of Vienna in 1683, a knightly act unparalleled.

After that, darkness settled down over Polish history and for a hundred years it is a sad story, ending in the three partitions of 1772, 1793, and 1795. But the low

tone of national life is relieved by noble private deeds in the heroic work of Kosciuszko and Pulaski in aiding the American colonies win their independence, a cause in which the latter gave up his life. Kosciuszko, however, returned to Poland to lead the revolution against Russia in 1794, a brief war, brilliant in its successes, glorious in its bravery and devotion, tragic in its end. This was followed in 1830 and in 1863 by two more revolutions against Russian oppression in which the Pole amply demonstrated both national and private bravery, endurance, idealism, and devotion.

What courage and consecration, then, was required of the Legions organized by Pilsudski when this small band of 172 crossed from Austrian Poland over into Russian Poland, August 6, 1914, and took the city of Kielce, an almost fantastic move of a few Polish heroes against the might of Russia. Yet, history justified that brave and knightly act, and the men who led it were five years from that time ruling Poland.

Once more after this the Poles had to demonstrate their national character and play again their age-long role in history when, rising from the ruins of six years of war, destruction, and disorganization, they in 1920 defeated the invading Bolshevik army and saved all Europe from its ever-present eastern menace.

So, through centuries of history the Polish tradition of knightly bravery, devotion to ideals, the offering of one's life for his country, faith, and freedom, and the use of power only in defence and in the rectification of wrongs, has had abundant exemplification. Small wonder it is so important a part of the Pole's idea of his national history and character.



9. *Dignity and sense of honour*

It is appropriate sequence to turn now to the Pole's traditional personal dignity, a trait of mind and character with which is so closely associated his special kind of pride, his high sense of honour and modest self-respect that we will treat all these elements as a related group. Let me hasten to say that the results and evidences of these traits are pleasing, and not annoying, as so easily could have been the case. Each of these four words or ideas has too wide a significance; each has its offensive right, its neutral and undecided centre, and its respect-compelling left. It is clearly in this left wing of the meaning of these words that the Pole traditionally and habitually dwells. Not all Poles, for a Pole can be an ass as well as can a Frenchman, an Englishman, an American, or a Japanese, but the characteristic Pole, the Pole who is the type most likely to be accepted by his own countrymen.

For his dignity is not of a kind which takes itself too seriously, somewhat formal though it be. Historically it ran to pomp, but long adversity has extracted both the wealth and the exuberance from Polish pride and left it what might be characterized as a quiet and restrained self-respect, appreciating form, good taste, and a bit of elegance, rather deprecating familiarity, and consciously keeping both word and act up to a certain level of refinement and culture. It disdains chauvinism as provincial and in bad taste, evidence of an abbreviated education and narrow outlook. It excludes boasting as unbecoming and regards snobbishness with contempt. It knows when and how to unbend, but by preference does not bend too far. It is as a rule pleasing; it wins

respect; and it gives social intercourse a tone and atmosphere higher than is the case when complete informality in address and conduct is the practice.

This sense of personal worth and dignity, pride, honour, and self-respect has not only ornamental but practical effects. It leads even quite poor people to habitually appear in public with the person well cared for, clothes clean and pressed, shoes repaired and shining. As the executive officer of an organization attracting thousands of members to all sorts of gatherings, I see plenty of evidences of this pride in good appearance even where resources are meagre. Then, as has been indicated before, these traits of mind place an embargo upon those who lost their estates in the war indulging now in public expressions of resentment, anger, or despair, or upon apology for restricted possibilities of hospitality. All understand.

Sense of honour, too, plays a very conscious part in daily decisions. Men react quickly to things which concern their honour, either as against it or as appealing to it. How often one hears "This touches my honour," to mean either that the person is offended, or that he feels a deep obligation in the matter, a sense of honour both touchy and responsive.

This traditional pride and personal dignity is neither shallow nor unjustified. It has sound foundations in a noble history, worthy racial and national achievement, cultivated tastes, and the fruits of an exacting educational system.

#### 10. *Intellectual culture*

No phase of my Polish studies has so deeply interested

me as has digging into the history of Polish culture, and explorations into the sources and nature of Poland's splendid tradition of intellectual life and its manifold expressions. The evolution of higher culture in Poland is clear in its broad outlines, and impressive in its details.

A good place at which to pick up the story is the reign of Kazimierz the Great, 1330 to 1370, of whom it is said that "he found Poland wood and left it walled." The figure is both literal and symbolic; it describes both architecture and social structure. The former meaning is easily illustrated. Wooden castles gave place to stone and brick ones. Walls about the cities were built in brick, replacing wooden palisades, and a number of today's most beautiful brick gothic churches, polychrome throughout on the inside and with good glass windows, were pushed to completion or begun, notably the Church of St. Mary in Krakow and the Cathedral in Wloclawek, unfortunately never seen by tourists.

In 1364 the University of Krakow was founded, its formulation being strengthened by a large gift from Queen Jadwiga just at the end of the century. It quickly rose to such importance as a centre of learning and culture that in 1416 it had sufficient standing to justify it in "forwarding an expression of its views in connection with the deliberations of the Council of Constance." By the end of the 15th Century it "was in high repute as a school of both astronomical and humanistic studies," in these capacities helping form the mind of the great Polish astronomer Copernicus, who entered the university in 1491. Two other outstanding and even today potent cultural influences of that century were the historical writings of Jan Dlugosz (1415-1480),

Poland's first real historian, and the wonderful wood carvings of Wit Stwosz, chiefly the great altar piece in St. Mary's Church, Krakow, one of the most notable of its kind in all Europe, twelve years in the carving, 1477-1489, and that sculptor's masterpiece.

The veritable tidal-wave of discovery, invention, and interest in learning which lifted the western world to new levels of civilization in the late 15th Century reached inland and as one of the developments brought about "The Golden Age" of Poland's cultural life, affecting architecture, art, literature, education, manners, and every phase of life, and establishing for all time since then the type and tradition of intellectual life in Poland.

The chief sources and constituents of this upward surge were the humanistic awakening with its liberal and classic spirit, the Italian Renaissance, and the Protestant Reformation. Its economic basis was the flow of gold which poured into Poland from the sale of its timber, grain, honey, wax, and amber, making possible the erection of fine buildings, the purchase of books, jewels, pictures, elegant garments and tapestries, and the inexplicable birth in that century of an immense number of men with intellects capable of rich scholarship, possessed of the spirit of progress, and inspired by the new currents moving the European mind. These men, and the women of their numbers, came from all the more privileged classes, the royal family itself, great magnates, the middle and lower noblemen (*szlachta*), the clergy, and the people of the cities, though chiefly from Krakow, the true centre of intellectual interest until the capital was moved to Warsaw in 1596. The atmo-

sphere in which the movement lived was the traditional Polish democracy and toleration at its best. The whole tendency died with the Counter-Reformation, Zygmunt III, and the wars of the 17th Century; then intellectual and cultural progress stopped in Poland until its new opening in the middle of the 18th Century.

The humanistic movement, "parent of all modern development," was of course much assisted, even made possible, by the newly discovered art of printing with movable type. Krakow became a printing centre; the art was much at home in the atmosphere of the local university, filled with the humanistic spirit and so much a part of its life that when Erasmus of Rotterdam printed his edition of Seneca in 1529 he dedicated it to the Bishop of Krakow as the representative of a distinguished centre of learning with a European reputation.

As to the Italian Renaissance, it owed its influence in Poland largely to two facts. Zygmunt I, in 1518, married Bona Sforza of the ducal house of Milan; this remarkable and highly capable woman was followed to Poland from Italy, in the course of the succeeding years, by architects, artists, artisans, scholars, merchants, and courtiers, and with these came the new Italian learning, forms, and creative spirit. The other influence was due to the new desire of Polish young men to study abroad and their choice of the universities of Bologna, Padua, Rome, and Ferrara, as their centres of study. The return of these young men to Poland after their Italian studies helped usher in Poland's Golden Age.

The Protestant Reformation reached Poland only two years after its launching by Luther at Wittenberg in 1517; it led to a new awakening of the mind, to printing,



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Warsaw Jews



discussing, preaching, and a whole series of related activities. Its direct results were not important in the long run; its indirect results became part of Polish life and culture.

These three currents, then, humanism, the Italian Renaissance, and the Protestant Reformation, were the stimulating agencies; let us examine more closely the means by which they came into Poland, found expression there and worked favourable effects upon Polish culture, producing the Golden Age and the establishing point of reference for all future development.

The universities, Polish and foreign, played a significant role. In Poland the University of Krakow long stood alone, but in 1580 King Stefan Batory founded the University of Wilno and in 1594 Jan Zamoyski established his famous Academy at Zamosc. The flow of students abroad was aided by the pressure of the clergy upon the rich men of the day to keep at least one student in a university, either Polish or foreign. This going of young men to study in other lands was no small dribble; it involved many hundreds of students, Professor Kot thinks about 150 a year, studying chiefly at Padua and Bologna but also in other universities in Italy, France, and Germany.

Printing naturally lent wings to the new learning, the first Polish press being set up in Krakow in 1474, and a number of other presses arising early in various centres. Certain of the magnates founded printing establishments on estates and there helped multiply the printed page and its enlightening influence. These early publications were largely religious and political or collections of laws and editions of the Latin writers, which enjoyed a great vogue in early Poland.



From these influences libraries and private museums began to grow, laying the foundations for the great Polish libraries of later days and of today, the Krakow University Library, the Zaluski, Zamoyski, and others, collections of distinction. One phase of this printing and collecting gives much joy to collectors today, the handsome maps of Poland printed by the great map-makers of the 16th Century, such as Mercator and Ortelius, and the engravings and plans of cities. No few Polish cities figured in the beautiful collections printed by Braun in his *Civitates orbis terrarum* and in similar volumes, prints that are now collectors' items decorating the walls of libraries, clubs, and private homes.

The injection into life during the 15th and 16th Centuries of a whole new series of problems, scientific, religious, political, literary, artistic, tremendously stimulated group discussion of intellectual matters, and the homes of the bishops, higher governmental officials, and of such men as Zamoyski became, through this, disseminating centres not only of opinion but of culture. The same influences led to a new thing in Poland, speech-making, and to sermons on a high level, dealing with religious and political themes. The classic example is the great priest, Piotr Skarga, court preacher at the end of the century.

Wealth and the increase of taste, stimulated by the Renaissance movement, led to a new era in architecture, and increasingly public buildings, churches, palaces, castles, and manor-houses, renaissance in type, rose over the land, and these, with their more adequate accommodations and luxury, both represented an advance in culture and furthered it, partly by their silent influence

and partly by the public and private gatherings they encouraged and facilitated. The residences of the richer nobles became regular courts, and each of these a school in manners, conversation, taste, and widening interests. Here scholars, statesmen, soldiers, poets, priests, pastors, and travellers met, discussed, disputed, and learned, mind sharpening mind. Young men were sent to these great houses to get education and training. The moulding impulses in these centres were not from near-by. The Poles disliked the Hapsburg regime for its love of money, absolutism, and intolerance, the German regime for its coarseness, the Muscovite for its obscenity; French and Italian influences were in the ascendancy, and that of ancient Rome studied intensely by the Poles and regarded as in many ways a model for Republican Poland.

Worthwhile things were going on, great events were in the air, classic changes in process. These currents stimulated many to write, and 16th-Century Poland is rich in private memoirs, informal essays and notes written for the writer only, and possibly for posterity, rich literary material not yet made available in English for the western world and awaiting a translator and printer. Many of these writings are unsigned and the writers are unknown. Much of the material, says Bystron, is the product of the custom of writing poems, or panegyrics on the occasion of births, deaths, baptisms, weddings, name-days, nomination to a position, taking office, the election or coronation of a king, the enthroning of a bishop or other church dignitary, or upon moving from one place to another. It is florid, classical in form, exaggerated in its terms, full of superlatives and flattery, exuberant and buoyant with new life, as one would

expect of an awakened intellect, a rich life, and a stimulating period. Though five centuries old, Poland in the 16th Century was a youth just arrived at manhood. What was then written bears out the theory of literature as a manifestation of national life.

As international acquaintance grew correspondence increased, and letters of permanent value were exchanged by Polish scholars with the rest of the intellectual world. The medium of this correspondence was either Latin or the language of the person abroad, for the Poles have always been linguists. Jan Zamoyski used six languages. Martin Kromer commented, "Now when they see that it is valuable to know languages, orators, and the humanities, our people have reached for these eagerly." The Polish scholar Jacob Gorski wrote about 1580, "The sign of a man worthy to serve his country is this, that he knows many languages. The King of Poland needs people who know not only how to speak Polish, but also Latin, German, Muscovite, Tartar, Turkish, Wallachian, Spanish, and Italian." Poles wanted to travel abroad, read foreign books and "not sit among the foreigners who fill Poland and be dumb." The Pole today with his ability to use three or four and often six or seven foreign tongues is the true son of these 16th-Century Poles.

In the first half of the century Latin was the medium of cultured writing and conversation. Starowolski discusses this subject in his *History of Poland* and notes the following points: The chief purpose of the schools was the acquisition of fluency in speaking and writing Latin. That language was used widely in both public and private life: in the courts of law, meetings of parliament,

the royal chancellery, in international relations, and in dealings with foreign visitors. Kromer says you could find more Latinists in Poland than in Italy. Even simple people knew something of the tongue, the coachman of a Polish bishop visiting in Vienna talking in Latin with Emperor Ferdinand I. Zygmunt Stary's first wife wrote to him in Latin, and Queen Bona used it in her confidential conversations. Copernicus, Kopernik in Polish, wrote his monumental thesis on the movement of the heavenly bodies in Latin. In Latin the Polish historians wrote for the whole of Europe. All this established a tradition, so that in Poland today one hears more Latin than in any western country. The use of Polish as a literary language began to replace Latin only in the middle and latter decades of the 16th Century, when Mikolaj Rey and Jan Kochanowski launched Poland's first significant literary movement, writing in Polish and making that tongue a language of cultivated expression.

One other point needs mention in painting the picture of the wealth and culture of 16th-Century Poland, namely, the elegance of the dress of the nobility, and the courtly manners to go with it. When in 1573 a delegation of twelve Poles visited Henry of Valois in Paris to notify him of his election to the Polish Crown, the French courtiers said of themselves that they were dumb and provincial in comparison with the elegant Poles. Lest this give an impression of lack of virility, let us note that the speaker of that delegation was Jan Zamoyski, one of the great soldiers of the century, as Ivan the Terrible learned not many years after this.

A few words about this man Jan Zamoyski will enrich and help complete our account. He was the great

Pole of his age. Born in 1541, at sixteen he went abroad to study, first at the Court of France, later in Germany and Italy. In his early twenties he was Rector of the University of Padua and the outstanding man in its foreign colony. Returning to Poland at twenty-four, he was made secretary to the king and spent three years putting the royal archives in order, studying and labelling all the documents and making himself the best-informed mind in Poland on Polish law and history. With the death of the king he came to the front, and was literally the king-maker of Henry of Valois in 1573, Stefan Batory in 1576, and Zygmunt III in 1587. He re-founded the city of Zamosc and had it entirely planned by Italian architects just as it stands today. Here he founded his academy. Under Batory he became Crown Chancellor and in 1580 the head of the army also. At one time while in the field in command of the army he had the Latin exercises of the young men in his academy sent to him for correction. He was scholar, soldier, statesman, and true Christian, and in all these capacities one of the foremost men of his epoch.

This, then, was 16th-Century Poland, the day of its Golden Age, the period in its history which established the nature, the direction, and the intensity of Polish culture, and laid the foundations of Poland's tradition of intellectual life and interest.

The 17th and, until its last third, the 18th Centuries added nothing to this side of Polish life. In November 1764 Stanislaw August Poniatowski ascended the throne and began his thirty-one years' reign, full of political misfortune and with only a moment of glory, the Constitution of the 3rd of May 1791, and ending with

the complete dismemberment of Poland. But though dark on its political side, the period was one of great cultural advance. The king, a man of artistic and literary taste and French background, became the central figure in an intellectual revival. Dyboski says of him that "his enlightened patronage of all intellectual and artistic endeavour turned his capital, Warsaw, into a centre of high refinement and truly creative effort," and comments that his reign "is justly remembered as another 'Golden Age' equal in cultural splendour to the glorious and more happy Krakow era of the 16th Century."

The most permanent elements in this glory are the architectural, of which the beautiful Lazienki Palace in Warsaw is an example; the most noble were: the achievements of the Educational Commissions appointed in 1773, proud boast of the Poles as the first Ministry of Education in Europe; the development of the "Collegium Nobilium," a school something on the order of the English public schools, founded by Stanislaw Konarski and opened in its new building in 1754; Konarski's other educational and reform efforts; the new constitution referred to above; and the scientific and literary work of Stanislaw Staszic. Worthy also were the products of new porcelain and faience factories developed in half a dozen parts of Poland and producing commercial and artistic pottery, now museum pieces. At this time also the first Polish national theatre came into being, 1765; historical writing and poetry each experienced a revival, and literary periodicals were founded. Other areas of intellectual effort, such as philosophy, economics, political science, and pedagogy were illu-

minated by names which, with those above, are definitely units in the Polish intellectual tradition and will long so remain.

These men had scarcely passed off the stage before another and long-protracted series of additions to the list of men who form Poland's cultural tradition began to appear, grouped in the second and last quarter of the 19th Century, names known to all who know anything of Poland and playing roles of great importance in the formation of the national spirit. We think of such classic names as Mickiewicz, Slowacki, and Krasinski in poetry and drama, whose writings each in its special way sustained the Poles during their darkest years of despair and helped keep the hope of liberty aflame; Fredro, a writer of classic comedies; the historian Lelewel; great painters such as Matejko, Chelmonski, Brandt, Wyspianski, and the Gierymskis; and as we reach our own day, such writers of great power and international fame as Sienkiewicz, Reymont, and Zeromski, and the less known abroad Rydl and Wyspianski, the latter a poet and dramatist as well as a painter.

Part also of Poland's intellectual tradition are its men of distinction as chemists, physicists, mathematicians, and, an odd phenomenon in the modern history of Poland, the long list of known and almost unknown engineers who created and operated the railroads not only of Poland but of Czarist Russia, and who went abroad to become great engineers in other lands, America's distinguished engineer Modjeski being their present-day spiritual descendant.

The Polish tradition of intellectual culture is not a dead fact of the past; it is very much a live and active

force of the present, a creative and formative fact of life, operative in many spheres. In the first place, in the political. Since attaining its freedom Poland has had three presidents, and each of them was chosen from the ranks of distinguished university professors, the present President, Dr. Moscicki, being an industrial chemist of considerable renown. Poland's second prime minister was the great pianist Paderewski. Among other prime ministers of intellectual distinction was the successful Professor Kazimierz Bartel. Every cabinet contains men who have demonstrated their brains and abilities first as university professors, later as men of public affairs. Brains are recognized, appreciated, and put to use for the State. People expect this; it is in line with the tradition.

Also in that line is the very solid work done in the public secondary schools, where the scholastic standards are very high. Those boys and girls who finish their courses successfully receive their so-called "matura," which carries with it a status sufficiently valuable that I have known grown men over thirty years old working long after school years to secure this diploma. As to a university course, it is the door through which most must go to gain high position.

Mention has been made of the libraries and museums founded in the 16th Century. The 19th Century added many others, largely of private origin; post-war days have multiplied these manifold, but almost entirely as public libraries with numerous branches. Art galleries and ethnographic and regional museums have sprung up everywhere to satisfy the people's hunger for beauty and knowledge. The theatre, long famous, continues its



distinguished career, while opera is sung regularly in the five largest cities and frequently elsewhere. Numerous orchestras and choirs give innumerable concerts.

Soon after arriving in Poland we took note of the high level of general conversation, with far less of gossip, sport, servants, and business in it and more of art, literature, music, history, and serious matters and events than we had found elsewhere. Going into the private library of an established family one quickly understands this; such conversation simply corresponds to the normal interests of the people of the educated classes. In the summer of 1938 my wife and I spent our vacation in a summer boarding-house in a rather remote place. The house was already full, so when we came we were given the sitting-room and bedroom of the hostess. The library attracted us, and as we considered it very representative and typical we noted its contents. The list will be a good exhibit with which to bring this chapter on the intellectual tradition toward its close.

In Polish, noted works on Rome, Sienna, and Henry III of France; the Bible; the famous poets Mickiewicz, Slowacki, and Krasinski; the works of Zeromski, Norwid, and Krasicki. Several general histories of Poland, one of the 1863 revolution, and a history of Polish literature; a dictionary and a twenty-volume encyclopaedia.

In French, Stendhal, Racine, Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, numerous novels of no special note, and Shakespeare and Sterne in translations.

German was represented by Goethe, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Remarque and others.

A Russian encyclopaedia and other books.

Of two-language dictionaries, these: Polish-Ruthenian, Polish-German, Italian-Polish, German-Russian, English-Polish, and of one language, Russian, English, and French.

No wonder they have something to talk about.

Two somewhat unrelated characteristics of the Pole seem to require mention in this discussion of the tradition of intellectual culture and its modern effects and expressions. First, the Pole's characteristic good taste in actions, dress, conversation, and life generally, and his loathness to offend against his canons. The very multitude of illustrations forbids the disproportion of mentioning only a few.

Second, his preference for order and cleanness of dress and person. These preferences do not always extend to his desk and room and shop, but in the order and correctness of his person he is irreproachable. His cities are beginning to express this desire for neatness and cleanness, as witness the vast improvements not only in such former Russian cities as Lodz, Warsaw, and Wilno, but small places everywhere. Poznan, Krakow, and other cities not under Russian influence have never been other than clean and orderly. What was always possible there, now, handicaps removed, becomes the characteristic of the whole country. But what a wave of house-cleaning hits the land before the two great holidays, Easter and Christmas! I thought my Dutch and German ancestors knew how to clean house, but their wildest efforts were tame compared with the reign of terror set up by our servants as the holiday seasons approach. Then I could stand quite a bit less of national tradition.

### 11. *Negative aspects*

To be well understood, things must be seen in contrast and comparison, care being taken in the showing not to justify Dogberry's observation that "comparisons are odorous." This long chapter on Polish traits of mind and character may well close with a statement of the negative aspects of Polish mentality. Perhaps these are revealed by the absence in the Polish language of words for concepts familiar to the English-speaking world. Prominent among English traits and potent in the English tradition are the concepts represented by the words "sportsmanship," "fair play," and "gentleman." Each of these terms corresponds to something in the English tradition, owing its origin to the special psychology and the social and political history of the English. It is not to be expected that just these ideals would be those evolved in all other lands, peopled by a different race and experiencing different circumstances of life.

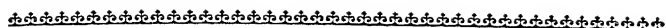
There is no word in Polish for any of the above terms, and in educational work among the young one misses these words so convenient as admonitions. "Sportsmanship," "fair play," "team-work," these are the heritage of a nation devoted to sport; the Poles know sport in the English sense only in the 20th Century, so those words are no part of the Polish tradition. Their role is to some extent played by the Polish words for "honour," "co-operation," and "noble," but not fully; these words from the vocabulary of sport, directly quoted from English without translation, are now coming into use with the great wave of sport and physical education rising in Poland.

We turn now to America for another set of contrasts, where the very American word "efficiency" supplies our first point. The word has no equivalent in the Polish language nor has the idea any great place in the Polish longing; the Pole has been somewhat indifferent to the charms of "efficiency," though his re-entrance into the life of the west is convincing him that here is a word and idea to reckon with. Another concept, the very heart of the American tradition, equality and freedom of opportunity, has not troubled the Polish conscience in the past, but in the democracy of today the hope tends to realization. The American ready and democratic easy good-fellowship is also not a part of the Polish tradition, which fact is indeed a medal with two sides.

Another trait and tradition of the Anglo-Saxon peoples not found among any of the Slavs is directness of approach and dealing, a frank statement of objectives, true revealing of intentions, and open method of transaction. The Slavs are more wary, suspicious, and covered in their entering into a discussion, stating an opinion, or conducting a negotiation. This arouses a negative reaction among Anglo-Saxons, but it is a trait to be understood in the light of the history of Poland for the last three centuries and the Pole's long contact with orientals. Another western trait, known to the Poles but by no means a tradition, is punctuality.

For two of his mental lacks and omissions one has great praise; the Pole is not vulgar, in any sense of the word, and he is not chauvinistic. This is not saying that there are no vulgar and no chauvinistic Poles. One is here discussing the national tradition and the type of mind arising in conformity to it and representing it.

There are lands in Europe in which one is not surprised when, for instance, he encounters coarse jokes and pornographic pictures. There are European countries where these things seem to be thoroughly at home and even representative. Poland is not one of those countries. The national taste is against these things, not permissive of them. I have remarked that even when a Pole is morally rotten he tries not to be offensive to good taste. As to chauvinism, it is indeed rare, extremely rare, and never characteristic.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE POLISH TRADITION AS TO SOCIAL LIFE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The division between the matter of this chapter and of the previous one is not sharp. Just wherein a trait is personal and not social or the reverse is not easily determined; things were discussed in the preceding chapter which would be almost equally in place here, and some of the points to be made in this chapter could be transferred bodily to the one before it. But on the whole those Polish characteristics to which we now turn are displayed in social relationships rather than as individual qualities. The arrangement is the writer's convenience, not a scientific analysis.

### 1. *The family*

The family is among the strongest of all the Pole's ties. Here the tradition is ancient, known, and authoritative. It is ancient, going back into history far beyond the 16th Century, the more or less bench-mark of this book; it is operative in all spheres and levels of society; its authority is very great. When one sees Poland with his mind's eye, a vast land dotted with manor-houses as the characteristic home of its tradition-forming class, he at once understands the role the family played in Polish life and still plays, weakened though it be by the disintegrating influences of modern times; a role not only biological and educational, but to an unusual degree,

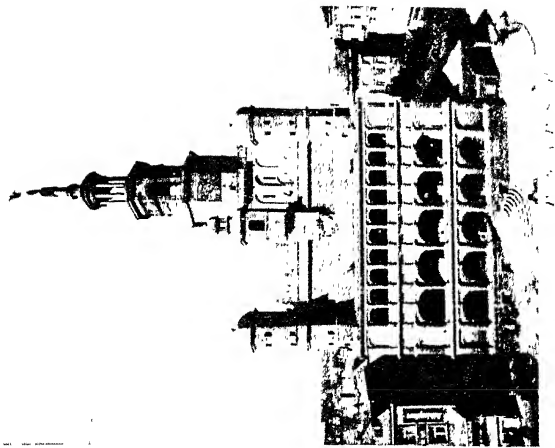
as compared with England or America, economic and political; economic, obviously; political, because of its solidarity, extent, unity of interest, and the number of its connected and dependent retainers. We quite understand this political power of the family when we see it against the background of the disenfranchisement and political impotence of the cities from the 16th to the 19th Centuries.

The chief facts to grasp about this family tie are, as indicated above, its extent and authority. Its extent is indicated by the inclusiveness of the terms "brother" and "cousin." In English terminology brothers are the sons of a common father and mother; not so in Poland. Such a brother is there referred to as "a born brother," the word "brother" being extended in its meaning to include cousins, while a cousin, far from being the child of an aunt or uncle, may be a relative so distant that it is difficult to trace the connection. Another indication of the importance of the family tie is the unparalleled multitude of words in Polish designating the exact nature of blood connection when it is desired to state it, one word for uncle meaning the brother of the father, another meaning the brother of the mother, and so on to a degree of complication and exactness utterly bewildering to a poor foreigner trying to learn the language and who's who. Then, there is the father's side of the family designated as "the sword side" and the mother's as "the distaff," the latter term not new to us.

The tie of the family is expressed in two symbols, the name and the crest, of which, indeed, the latter is the older, family names becoming established and general even among the szlachta only in the 16th Century. All



JAN ZAMOYSKI  
A famous 16th Century Noble



The 16th Century Poznań City Hall





crests have names, and derive either from an object or from an animal. These names were used as guiding and rallying cries in battle in the early centuries, the object carried upon a pole as a banner showing where the family was fighting, locating the leader in the midst of the *mêlée*. When family names came into vogue, both crest name and family name were at times used, Zuk-Skarszewski indicating those of the name Skarszewski who had Zuk as their crest and seal. There are Skarszewskis who are not Zuks and Zuks who are not Skarszewski.

The interplay and evolution of name and crest is interesting, and is well illustrated in the name of a very famous Polish family, the Zamoyskis. Their titular ancestor is one Florian Szary, which name means gray, probably given because of the gray homespun clothes he wore. His crest was Kozlorogi, the head, shoulders, and forelegs of a goat. After the battle of Plowce he was found by the king run through the abdomen by three spears, living, but suffering. His strength and fortitude so impressed the king that he ordered Szary to be especially cared for, and then gave him permission to add to his crest three crossed spears, which new crest was called "Jelita," literally "bowels." This is the family crest to this day. The family later moved to a more eastern province and lived, in relation to their neighbours, "beyond the bridge," which in Polish is "za mostem"; their place eventually became habitually referred to as Zamosc, and the family, in the 15th Century, as the family of Zamosc or Zamoyski. Of this family came the famous Jan Zamoyski, 1541-1605.

Families grew into clans, and into these clans others

not of the blood were at times received, swelling the power of the clan or living upon it as the case might be. These ties were so important that it was quite in the nature of things that in the 18th Century the great Czartoryskis were commonly referred to simply as "the Family." The obligations within a family were numerous. Mutual help of all kinds was obligatory, be it military, legal, moral, or financial, as was also right of residence if a member of the family was in need of a home, temporary or permanent. These obligations were understood and accepted. All this made genealogies of great importance, and family trees were carefully preserved.

The head and absolute lord of the family was the father. Name and crest came through the male line, emphasizing the father's position of authority, at first unlimited, then regulated by statute. The father was much honoured. He received the three traditional ceremonial salutations, in fact and in word, "I kiss your hand, I embrace your knees, I fall at your feet," but later these formalities were abridged. The father's authority made the mother often little more than the head servant and the children dependents far into life. Later, with the growing liberty of the 18th Century, woman began to acquire a place and dignity of her own but not as head of the family. Her skill and wisdom as manager of the daily life of the estate is traditional. Occasionally an especially capable woman ruled the home. Nowadays it is *her* hand which is kissed by the children after meals, and by the guests after a dinner party, with the usual "thank-you" from all.

This strong family tradition has its effects on Polish

life even today. The father is head of the home; both parents have authority over the children, and family discipline is real. Children remain under parental authority longer than in the west, and seem to mature later because of this. Family duties and obligations are serious matters, reminding one of the similar situation in China and Japan, where blood ties have real significance and imply responsibilities. Respect for parents is genuine, the deference of grown children being evident both in word and in attitude. It is a noble tradition. May it weather for years.

## 2. *Hospitality*

We come to the Polish tradition of hospitality, a truly splendid one. Its roots are in five facts: the open, generous, even lavish social disposition of the Pole, making hospitality the most natural thing on earth; the wealth of the land, which provided the means; the existence of great castles, palaces, and manor-houses, affording space for the exercise of hospitality; the absence of well-developed towns with hotels, and the corresponding predominance of life on the land, making private hospitality a physical necessity; and finally, forms of political and social life, of which open homes and a sincere welcome were necessary conditions.

The tradition is deeply embedded in literature, customs, and proverbs. Books and stories about old Poland teem with happy and proud references to this tradition of hospitality. Guests were met at the door with the custom-honoured bread and salt, symbols of welcome, and the doors swung open freely to all who came wearing sword and belt, symbols of the *szlachta*. and greeted

the host with the Polish salutation, "Czesc," "honour." He was asked by the hostess to take a seat at the table and "eat for two," his visit being received as an honour to the home, never as an intrusion, an imposition, a nuisance, nor resented as a cause of trouble to the household. "Guests in the home, God in the home" was a widely current and believed proverb; when the guests left the house was put in order "until God gives guests again." No saying comes down from the past more honoured than "Czem chata bogata tem rada," which may be freely rendered "The riches of the cottage we give with joy." In the wealthier homes several places were always laid at table for unexpected guests, set, as the saying was, "for the man beyond the mountains," the guest from a distance.

Such was the nature of the Pole and of his tradition of hospitality. That this open-handed receiving of all and sundry, often in large numbers, was possible was due only to the great wealth of the land, rich in its agricultural and timber products, and from the sale of the produce of the farm in foreign markets. This wealth led to the erection of spacious residences; up until the middle of the 16th Century these were of wood, chiefly larch, pine, and oak, for stone was scarce in many parts of Poland, and building with brick as the material for private residences became common only after 1550 and the influx of Italian architects who knew brick and stone but did not understand building with wood.

The size of these castles, palaces, and manor-houses, "dwory" in Polish, was proverbial. Of one there comes down to us the report that it "had as many windows

as there are days in the year, as many rooms as there are weeks, as many halls as there are months, and as many bastions as there are seasons." For until the end of the 17th Century all these residences of the great lords were fortified. The castle of the Firleys at Janoweic had 105 rooms, and it was by no means the greatest; not little rooms *à la* 20th Century, but broad and wide and high. These many rooms were by no means unnecessary, as we shall see.

The towns of the day were of a mean order, especially over toward Eastern Poland, and in these, or at cross-roads, one found only a "karczma," a tavern of most humble condition, kept by a none too clean and orderly Jew. Only in homes could travellers be properly accommodated, and when the guests came in numbers, on the occasions we shall now name, there were no adequate living and eating quarters except in the homes of the rich and well-to-do.

The occasions for the expression of this hospitality, its times and forms, were manifold.

In the Middle Ages it was the custom for the king and his court to move about from place to place on tours of inspection and for other purposes; there was no place to go but to the homes of the magnates, who had to be prepared for just such peaceful but highly expensive invasions. Entertainment was lavish, and set a standard for similar visits of one noble to another, accompanied by a small army of retainers, all of whom had to be housed and fed. The later sessions of local and national parliaments brought the nobles together in large numbers, and there were no hotels in any modern sense. In the relatively unoccupied days of the winter,

social visits, dances, house and hunting parties were organized on a grand scale, with noble feasts as part of the entertainment; in later days arose the famous "kulig," a carnival-season sleighing party, in which a jolly crowd gathered at one manor-house and unexpectedly invaded a whole series of other houses, the crowd taking each new host and hostess along to the next house, much eating, drinking, dancing, and wild driving through the snow making up the night's programme. One such is described in the second chapter of Zeromski's book *Ashes*. It took pretty hardy hospitality to weather such a storm.

The less rich copied the richer, the cottage imitated the manor-house both in spirit and in expression, and a nation-wide custom developed, strengthened by numerous visits, fairs, kirmesses, wedding celebrations, holidays, harvest festivals, and special family and neighbourhood celebrations, until with the passing of the generations every Pole knew hospitality to be one of the unwritten laws of the land. The vicissitudes of the partitions and the Great War have played havoc with noble old customs, but something of the spirit still remains and the tradition is not forgotten.

### 3. *Good food and drink*

Naturally this rich, well-housed, hospitable, joyous, luxury-loving 16th-Century Pole set a good table and loved feasts. For another country in whose literature, memoirs, and histories eating and drinking finds so extensive and detailed a record one searches his mind and memory in vain. Add to this local literature of feasting the reports of travellers and temporary residents

in Poland, Beauplan in the 17th Century for instance, and we have no difficulty in picturing the social and festive life of the Poland of the Golden Age and the succeeding two centuries, the 17th and 18th, nor in understanding how it is that there is a decided Polish tradition of good eating and drinking, an old tradition and a present fact.

Normal everyday eating was good, but the feasts of the day can be characterized by no word milder than extraordinary. Let us see first what there was to eat. As the opening course, then as now, came soups, of which there were four chief kinds, the delicious *barszcz* made of the slightly fermented juice of the red beet, a cabbage soup, a vegetable soup, and soups enriched with sour cream, all these still characteristic Polish soups. Fish, meats, and game followed, roasted or boiled, and of almost endless variety, with various sauces but perhaps chiefly a white cream of horse-radish, which when I first ate I thought simply ravishingly good. Of course there were beef, veal, and pork; a great number of kinds of fish, praised by Beauplan as being cooked as they could cook fish nowhere else in the world; but after we have named these regulars, and chicken, geese, and ducks, we must add bison, boar, deer, hare, and numerous sorts of game birds, such as pheasants, partridge, and many kinds of wild water-fowl. The meats were served hot, cold, dried, smoked, and as sausage, the smoked meats having a special flavour due to having been cured with juniper, a distinctive quality of Polish smoked meats to this day. These smoked meats and sausage, cooked with cabbage, gave the wonderful "hunters' bigos" of modern as well as ancient Poland.



We must not forget to add the popular large crayfish and small crabs. As condiments they had mustard, vinegar, and eventually all the oriental spices and flavourings, much appreciated, good to the Polish palate which inclined more to sharp, sour, and spicy things than to sweets.

After the meats came vegetables, such as cabbage, onions, beans, mushrooms in abundance, broccoli, turnips, carrots, beets, string beans, spinach, garlic, gherkins, and cucumbers, some of these being old native Polish vegetables, others brought in from abroad and domesticated. There were various kinds of cheese, served alone or cooked in various combinations; breads made from wheat, rye, and other grains, and, though probably not at feasts, then and today numerous mushes and porridges, the so-called "kasza"; add pancakes and dumplings of no few kinds and you have the old Polish kitchen.

For the final course, chiefly fruits, such as apples, plums, pears, a wide variety of wild berries, and imported grapes and melons. From France and Italy came the art of decorative sugar pieces, which at all ceremonial feasts were of astonishing and fantastic elaborateness, chiefly as ornaments.

We must make special mention of the honey, for which ancient Poland was far-famed, and from which the popular drink "miod" or mead was made by a process of fermentation, a drink which makes you drunk only from the waist down, with surprising effects upon strangers who discover they are drunk only when they attempt to rise.

Which introduces drinking. My favourite quotation

here is one found on the back of an old Polish map I bought in London, the Speede map of about 1630, to which, indeed, little need be added. He says Poland is "very cold, and by that means she hath little Oil, and scarce Grapes enough to teach them the use of Wine. A great defect amongst so good drinkers; for they have a name for that equal with any part of Germany; and that I think gives no ground to the rest of Europe." If there were no native wines there were plenty from Hungary, whence the widely known Polish taste for wine "bred in the vineyards of Hungary and educated in the wine-cellars of Krakow." Mead was drunk both hot and cold; of it the inimitable Zagloba says in *The Deluge*, "The Lord God knew why he created bees." Much beer was drunk, both cold and hot, and, an odd custom, often with cream added. This excessive drinking brought a later reaction, and the Pole of today, apart from the peasants, is no great drinker; but at these ancient feasts "beer was poured as if on a mill-wheel."

All these rich possibilities of food were further enriched by the numerous Poles who travelled abroad bringing back with them ideas, cookery books, and chefs, and through the enlarging of the Polish cuisine by the various Italian and French queens wedded to Polish kings, especially by Queen Bona in the early 16th Century; her garden greens for soup are still called "włoszczyzna," "Italian things," in all the markets.

Now let us drop in on one of these famous feasts. A huge dining-hall, often with a balcony for an orchestra; the board arranged either as several long tables, or as a square open at one end; if the party is small, a round

table has the advantage of having no head, so no one is offended by the position given him. White linen, damask, or even lace table-cloths, at times changed between the numerous courses, which were not served too carefully. Behind each guest stood his own servant to attend him and clear his place. Each guest is served a plate and a spoon; his knife and fork, and possibly a spoon also, he himself brings in an elegant case carried in his wide sash belt. The feast will be a long one, lasting even four to six hours, for eating and drinking are only part, not all, of the programme. There are toasts and much talk. At times even a bit of fighting when too much has been drunk and a temper goes awry.

We come to the toasts, of which there was no end, numerous glasses or goblets for this purpose being set at each place, as after an important toast the glass must be dashed to the floor so as never to be used again. For these toasts Hungarian wine was used, the Poles then having had a saying, "It is not wine unless it is Hungarian." The toasts were to the king first, of course, then the queen, the bishops, various high dignitaries, guests, and to others appropriate to the occasion; a toast meant a speech, wine, and a new hum of conversation; no stiff formality except at first. The more toasts the more joy.

Such feasts were a chief feature of social life; they were called for by all sorts of ceremonial occasions, a betrothal, a wedding, the birth of a son, a christening, the arrival of an honoured guest, the opening of a local parliament, and what not. To live was to eat and drink. To die was also, for a first-class funeral had to be followed by a feast for the guests. This phase of life

cost much money and no few families brought their estates to ruin by their hospitality and the magnificence of their public dinners, at which there could be as many as sixty courses, served during the long six hours of the feast with much toasting and talking between.

When women attended these dinners they sat together at a separate table, or in a row at one side of a main table. It would be too much to say that the feasts were ladylike; 16th - Century Poland, like 16th - Century England and France, dressed well but behaved—not so well.

When tea and coffee came to Poland they were god-sends to the Poles and did much to bring this fierce social drinking to an end. Today men and women fill the tea-rooms as centres of friendly meeting and conversation, and though much time is wasted there, the physiological results as against alcohol are beneficial.

With the Saxon kings of the 18th Century two new elements entered the dining customs of the Poles: strong alcoholic drinks, such as vodka, before meals, and the necessary fatty foods to go with them for gastronomic comfort and physical equilibrium. Thus came in the custom of elaborate "hors d'œuvres," in Polish "zakaski," pronounced zakonski, which today so confound the inexperienced newcomer. They are on the buffet or are passed round before the dinner and are so elaborate and tasty as to lead a stranger to mistake them for the whole meal and fill up on them, only to have them followed by a big dinner with everything from soup to nuts—alas, he learns the Polish custom too late, for he has raided the delicious zakonski.

Both the spirit and the financial means for these great

feasts disappeared from Poland with the awful tragedy of the late 18th-Century partitions, the 19th-Century spoliation of the Pole by Russia and his repression by Prussia; the six years of the Great War and the subsequent wars for the restoration and liberty of Poland removed all possibility of the return of the custom in the 20th Century, but the memory remains and the excellent Polish kitchen, one of the best in Europe.

#### 4. *Courtesy, etiquette, and manners*

To the traveller moving about the world somewhat widely the forms of etiquette experienced in different countries are often a matter of special interest. Of the many countries which I have visited the three which I have studied most in this respect are Japan, England, and Poland. Japanese etiquette impresses most people as formal, stiff, and somewhat lacking in sincerity; it is a game, played according to well-known rules, in which each carefully watches the other for his next cue and for indications as to how far to go; also, it takes itself rather too seriously. English etiquette, at table the finest in the world, strikes one as in general largely negative, consisting in no small degree in what is "not done," an etiquette of social prohibitions, though of course the usages of polite society in England consist extensively enough of concrete indications. One feels, however, that it is repressive.

But in Poland manners have spirit; the numerous generally accepted forms are executed with relish; they seem to come from the depths of the personality, and to be the cultivated man's way of expressing just what he feels. The Pole enjoys his etiquette. It is quite

concrete in its forms, and needs to be learned; a foreigner going to Poland from the Anglo-Saxon world may not merely trust his natural instincts of courtesy, self-restraint, and good taste; if he does he will find himself not as polite as the men he is meeting. The tradition of courtesy, etiquette, manners, is old in Poland, and because of its distinctive quality we shall find it not uninteresting to look at its origin, its spirit, its manner, and its forms.

Again we must turn to the 16th Century with its great increase of wealth, foreign travel, and intellectual and social stimulus. The first of the potent influences leading to the improvement of manners was the arrival of Bona Sforza from the Courts of Italy to be the wife of King Zygmunt I, bringing with her both courtiers and courtliness. Increased Polish foreign travel and study followed, and the whole great awakening of humanism, the Renaissance, and the Reformation, all with profound effects upon general culture and consequently upon the spirit and forms of courtesy. Then came the verses and social satires of Jan Kochanowski and Mikolaj Rey's *The Life of a Respectable Noble*, to translate a title not quite exactly to be rendered into English.

But most potent of all was Lukasz Gornicki's Polish translation in 1566 of Baltazar Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* of 1528. This man Castiglione was the foremost courtier of his day, and his book on courtly manners written in Italian and soon translated into all the languages of Western Europe was the accepted bible of etiquette for a century. Gornicki's *Dworzanin Polski*, "The Polish Courtier," is not an exact translation but an adaptation

of the Italian text to Polish conditions. It was issued in edition after edition, and is still a work of interest, my own copy being a reprint of about 1928, one of a series of reissues of old Polish classics. It deals with such matters as dress, conversation, behaviour at table, drinking, dignity, general conduct in society, self-restraint, intellectual culture, ideals of life, ethics, and courtesy. As a force in the formation of Polish manners it has played a leading role.

Next in chronological sequence comes the influence of the two French queens of Polish kings in the 17th Century and their attendant courtiers, adding a French element to Polish etiquette; then came the cultural revival under King Stanislaw in the late 18th Century. Through these three centuries, the 16th, 17th, and 18th, the usages and manners of the court of the king were given wide currency through the custom of sending young Poles to the courts of the great nobles for social and political education. Thus, through example and through print, manners and social practices were established, nation-wide in their extent and deep in their influence. Note the lack of German content in all this; German influence was in the spheres of intellectual life, business administration, and the conduct of war and government; it was never a factor in manners. Throughout these three centuries, before the political disruption of Poland by her powerful neighbours and when the general European tradition was forming, elegance of manners decidedly differentiated the Pole both from his German and from his Russian contemporaries; a distinction of person the Pole has not lost.

This acquisition of social grace due to the finest of

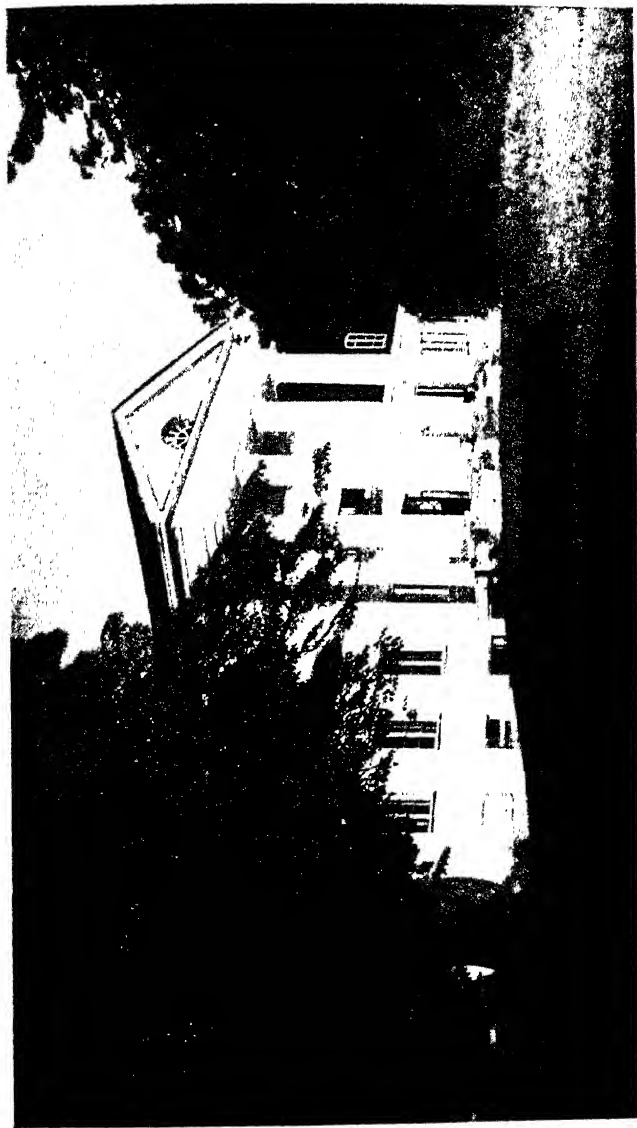
cultural influences penetrating Polish life would not have taken place had the outward form not corresponded to, awakened, and expressed something already within the Pole, a psychological characteristic and inheritance of his nation or race. One examines this basic spirit, and finds its ground in two aspects of the educated Pole: a deep feeling of the compulsions of courtesy toward all, and a sense of his own self-respect requiring an attitude of respect toward others. As a result he is as a rule courteous, even formally so, to his daily associates, as one can illustrate with a multitude of typical instances. He shows special deference in five relationships: to a woman, a guest, one older than himself, one superior in rank, position, or station in life, and to a stranger. The manner of this courtesy is serious, dignified, a little stiff where influenced by military training, and though formal it is relieved by having a pleasing quality of sincerity and often of real grace. I find myself remembering for years spontaneous little acts or gestures of superb social poise which I have seen in Polish society, the very essence of just right.

For concreteness one must name these traditional expressions of deference, courtesy, and respect. The ones which first strike the stranger are: the universal custom of handshaking upon meeting and upon departing, with one person or with a whole group; the kissing of the hands of women, a ceremony not to be dispensed with, either in the house or on the street; men raise their hats to men, and boys follow suit with their school caps; the five persons mentioned above, a woman, a guest, an older person, one's superior, and a stranger, must be kept on the right-hand side, and must always



be allowed to pass first through a door. These forms of precedence are important. One remembers the incident of a certain diplomat who started to step into a carriage ahead of a cardinal, to be stopped by the cardinal's outstretched arm. "I'm the German Ambassador!" that worthy flared up. "That explains your conduct, but it does not excuse it," said the cardinal. To step ahead in Poland, when one should step behind, is a bad break. There are a multitude of forms to be observed. Men always rise to talk to women or to any person to whom special respect is due; a man rises and comes from behind his desk to shake your hand when you arrive or depart; there is no back-slapping, except between old friends and then rarely; boisterous cordiality is not well received; letters open and close with very formal salutations, and the envelope to every and all is addressed either with the full words or the initials for "Jasnie Wielmozny Pan," meaning literally "Clearly Powerful Lord," a little strange when translated, but entirely everyday in Polish. "Pan" with the passing of centuries has come to be only "Mister," but the other words are just what they have always been. The Pole's strong sense of what is proper holds him to this ancient form of address.

These great and little courtesies dot all of life. Many men click their heels before shaking hands, or bow from the hips, hands at the trousers' seam, soldier fashion. When you meet a friend on the street he removes his cigarette from his mouth with his left hand before raising his hat with his right; though smoking on the street is not considered quite correct. Gracious little remarks enter into daily conversation; hats are immediately re-



Typical manor-house; in Polish, "dwor"



moved by men upon entering a shop to make a purchase; you do not enter a man's office wearing your overcoat; and so on *ad infinitum*. Some of it is pleasing; some of it is a little too much; all of it is very much within the Polish tradition of courtesy and good manners. Part of this courtesy is due, of course, to the influence of mediaeval chivalry, a view-point in life making a deep appeal to the Pole. In Poland chivalry is not just a word in the vocabulary. It is a definite picture of how a Pole of any social training should conduct himself.

#### 5. *Woman's place in social life and esteem*

Adequacy of treatment of this subject of the Polish tradition as to social life and relationships seem to call for a section on the place of woman in the Polish tradition, though that introduces a subject so rich in material as almost to call for a book in itself. Much is both said and implied all through this study as to the place of woman in Polish life, but here a few general observations are both in place and called for.

Dyboski, in his *Periods of Polish Literary History*, observes that "Polish woman was somewhat slow to emerge from the seclusion of her home, both socially and intellectually." "Her education," he continues, "was purely domestic, and even in the Renaissance period, when women of high learning and powerful character played such an important part in southern and western European society and politics, the Polish translator of that famous book of manners, the Italian *Courtier* of Castiglione, was obliged to replace the brilliant lady conversationalists of the original by men, in order to be true to Polish life."

But though early society in Poland was largely a man's society, woman in due time came into her place in all spheres of life, and the tradition with regard to women became clear and definite. Socially she is to be deferred to and treated with every courtesy and respect. In the home she is organizer and manager, especially on the large estates, where she has long had great authority. The knightly attitude toward woman is balanced by a general recognition of her strength of character and managerial ability. Among the peasants she is regarded by all as the chief element of stability and wisdom in an area where the wisdom of the peasant is a national proverb. The peasant woman is strong of body, conservative by temperament, and deeply religious. As yet she has had far too little education, but a better day is at hand.

In the upper levels of society woman's traditional position is undergoing revision; just what the new tradition is to be no one can clearly foresee. Her place in social and intellectual life and in literature and art is of course long since won and assured. She is increasingly entering the world of business and of official life. But her place in the home, due to the conditions of modern life, is changing; she has more leisure and less occupation, and the results are not too encouraging. The past is past; the present is transitional; the future not yet sketched out. In few spheres of life are the facts undergoing such change. Woman in the whole Slav world is entering a new day and we do not foresee its events.

Yet certain facts in the history of women in Poland give them a definite place in the national tradition. She co-operated with the men in the revolutionary move-

ments for the recovery of national independence; due to her opportunities and functions in the home she was the chief factor in the preservation of the Polish tongue and tradition in the days when to speak Polish and to teach Polish history was a crime; she is a mainstay of religion, and an active participant in social welfare work; she is a strong moral force at the back of the men; in the Bolshevik war she donned a uniform, took a gun, and fought for the liberties of her land. No Pole forgets these things.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# THE POLISH TRADITION AS TO POLITICAL LIFE AND ORGANIZATION

Two introductory notes to this chapter are necessary. In the first place it is not a chapter on the evolution of the Polish State and Constitution nor on the development of Polish political theory. It aims to be a fairly brief and entirely clear indication of the chief Polish traditions in the area of national political life and government, with just enough of historical background and atmosphere to make these indications entirely understandable. In the second place it seems wise to call attention to the fact that one always tends to interpret a word in the terms of a familiar historic setting, not stopping to remember that the word may have other equally true connotations. For instance, the word "democracy." Americans at once think of the form of government to be found in France or America, and are startled when first told that England is a democracy. So also with "republic"; to an American the word implies a president as the head of the government, but ancient Poland was a republic, and it had a king. But he was an elected king, hence the propriety of the term republic, *res publica*, a thing of the people. Which leads at once to our first topic.

### I. *A republic*

In the early ages Poland was increasingly and after 1572 completely a democratic, parliamentary republic,

rzeczypospolita in Polish—*rzecz*, a thing, *pospolita*, in common, the Latin words *res publica* set directly over into Polish, exactly what we mean by a republic, a commonwealth. At the head of the government was an elected king having very little power or authority, the gentry at each election requiring each successive king to resign more and more of the regal privileges and powers, until though the king reigned he certainly did not rule. Thus there took form an ever more potent tradition about the government, in three terms—the reality of being a republic, the fact of government by the people, and an unalterable opposition to centralized authority. Here we have the Polish political tradition in a nutshell.

“Thing of the people.” But who were the people? The gentry class of whom much has already been said, yet such a large, so numerous an element of the population that Poland as a republic, even though “a republic of nobles,” was by no means a fiction. In their relation to the State these nobles, the *szlachta*, were equal among each other, as has been explained. Their *liberum veto* preserved the heart of democracy, though not of good government, and protected minorities; indeed, it unduly empowered them. Finally, these equal nobles would as a rule have none of their own number as a king, preferring a foreign prince imported for the job and thoroughly tied hand and foot by a *pacta conventa*. All in all, Premier Skrzynski was justified in saying that until the time of its disruption in the 18th Century, “Poland possessed, without question, the most liberal political system that Europe up to that time had produced.”

It is sad to report that Poland's particular form of



democracy was its undoing, the cause of its fall and ruin. In the eternal conflict between the individual and the State the former had too complete a preponderance of power. The State needs authority to enforce justice, law, taxation, interior and foreign policy, and that power the self-governing or not-self-governing Pole was not willing to give his government. Within this fine theory of democracy the actual political tradition and record was one of disunity, of discord, of turbulent legislative bodies, of excessive individualism, of class selfishness, of short-sightedness in high places and circles, of grasping for privileges, of no strong sense of State; too much decentralization, too much family and group jealousy, too much democracy. It was, by the time of the 18th Century, an unlovely picture. The Poles themselves regret that period and its processes and think they have learned some wholesome lessons. These lessons are themselves now part of the political tradition.

Yet see how much of that 16th and 17th Century tradition was fine and good. The State exists for the citizen. The people rule. Minorities must be both heard and regarded. The army must be subject to the civil authorities. No political adventures abroad. Equality. Toleration. No inherited offices and honours. The basic good was, however, perverted into a practical bad and made Poland so internally weak that it could not resist the pressure exerted upon it and within it by its expanding and autocratic neighbours.

But perhaps it is fair to ask, just who did better than Poland during those centuries? Did Italy? Or France? Or Germany? Or Austria? Or England? Just who can come into court with clean hands and accuse Poland?

Noble individuals here and there, but no nation. It is excluded by their own history. And all lovers of liberty and justice and human rights will think with satisfaction of the noble treaty with the Jews made in Kalisz in 1264, the truly gospel elevation of the Polish-Lithuanian Treaty of Horodlo in 1413, the "no new law without the agreement of the king, the council, and of parliament" of the citizens in 1505 at Radom, the Constitution of May 3, 1791, and other enactments in which the Polish political tradition reached heights of genuine grandeur. It is rather a comforting thought, for those who love Poland both past and present, that its political faults were not of gross evil but the abuse of a principle good in itself.

One would like to understand better the roots of this so very early Polish republican democracy. Did it come from ancient Rome, or did it merely find in Roman history material congenial to its own point of view? Is it somehow a basic Slavic, or at least Polish, psychological trait? Has it perhaps no nobler origin than the warrior's realization of his real power over his ruler, and a belief that the man who mounts his horse and goes off to fight for the king has a right later to tell that king what he has fought to obtain or to preserve? At all events, in the course of its evolution, Polish democracy came to embody two very definite ideas: first, that the State is a man-made thing and exists for the citizen; that the nation, the race, is the permanent element, the form of the State being changeable at the will of man; it is man which is of God, all else man himself makes and for his own utility.

The second idea is that of the worth and dignity of

a man himself. To be sure, this idea did not extend itself to include the present, but neither did it in Greece, Rome, or Europe of the Middle Ages, nor in England during the early years of the industrial revolution, and in America it included the Negro only—one would like to say since 1863, but that seems too early a date by many decades. Yet with all the limitations upon the idea, centuries before Hegel wrote it, the Pole held that “man as man is free,” attributed to man a certain dignity not to be denied him by the State, and regarded democracy, in the words of one of the greatest European writers of our day, as “that form of society which is inspired above every other with the feeling and consciousness of the dignity of man.”

Poland was to the Pole an ideal of a type of life, not a mystical state and not the emanation of a semi-deified leader; and that type of life seemed to the Pole as most likely to be realized in a democracy, run by the citizens, free, and equal among themselves, they themselves choosing their ruler, making their laws, laying down the Polish way of life. This is the centre and heart of the Polish political tradition.

## 2. *Liberty, freedom*

All persons love liberty; of all white people the Poles among the most. Both personal and national liberty. Their history is full of the records of their passionate struggles to retain it, and to regain it after it had been lost in 1772 and 1793, of their insistence upon it, use of it, and reckless abuse of it during the 17th and 18th Centuries, and of their struggle fully to realize liberty during the whole six centuries from A.D. 1000 to 1600.

Pushing back through the thousand years of the history of the Pole from the Bolshevik Invasion of 1920 to the dawn of their recorded authentic political life in 962, we find the years and the pages filled with accounts of this nation's exuberant use of liberty during the centuries of its possession, their unwillingness to deprive others of it, their intense yearning for freedom after it had vanished, their epic sufferings endured as a consequence of their persistent and tragic efforts to regain their national liberty, and their never-to-be-forgotten repulse of the invading Russians when this newly regained Polish freedom seemed about to be taken from them in the Bolshevik war following the Great War. In painting, poetry, prose, and music, liberty is a permanent theme.

Not only this, but in what army of what nation seeking liberty have the Poles not fought? What war for freedom has their sacrifice and death not hallowed? In what land have Poles not died for this to them dearest of all rights? No important soil of Europe but covers their bones, while their part in the American war for national freedom is known to every American schoolboy.

In the 16th Century no speech was complete without reference to "our golden freedom" and in its name all sorts of legislation was both proposed and opposed. As the years and decades passed the typical Pole came more and more to regard freedom as an absolute to which from the bottom of his soul he was committed and pledged; to him it became the basic and essential condition of human dignity and existence. As a result, nowhere else in earlier Europe did the spirit of man

have so much opportunity to live and grow and express itself as in Poland. It was partly this which won the fear and hatred of 18th-Century Prussia, Austria, and Russia, and made the nations of the west unwilling to come to the aid of this free and democratic people in a century when freedom and democracy were not looked upon by western rulers as lovely things.

Poland's struggle to regain its lost freedom is too long a story to relate here; no justice can be done this tragic history in a few paragraphs; it must suffice to say that the world's records know no parallel to this epic resistance of the Pole to the efforts of Russia, Prussia, and Austria to enslave, denationalize, and break him. Three great revolutions mark the efforts of three successive generations to shake off the yoke, the uprisings of 1794, 1830, and 1863; minor struggles, strikes, and revolts sprinkled the years with blood; the greatest of Poland's poets, painters, and prose-writers made liberty and love of Poland their chief themes; the roads to the mines and wildernesses of Siberia were strewn with the Polish dead who perished in the snow *en route*; all of us living in Poland know personally and intimately those who led or followed these revolutionary movements in the last years before the regaining of liberty in 1918. It is a heroic, heart-rending tale; though mentioned here in this brief way it is a towering testimonial to the Pole's passionate and undying love of freedom and his willingness to pay any price to possess it. Freedom is a first principle of the Polish political tradition.

What were the positive and the negative aspects of this freedom? Turning first to the negative, one finds

in Polish history and character both hatred and fear of eight very definite menaces to his liberties. First, he was in general ever alert against the indications of any initiative which might issue in modification or restriction of the degree of freedom he had won from his rulers through several centuries of struggle, be this a restriction either of his thought or of his action. Suspicion of such intention always resulted in immediate turbulence. Second, and again a general rather than a specific thing, he reacted violently against any "imposed solution," either from the crown, from the magnates, or from a foreign Power. Third, and this is very specific indeed, he hated taxes, and not only hated them but successfully legislated himself out of paying them; he considered them a gross infringement upon his liberty as a free citizen and arms-bearing knight.

In the fourth place, the Pole fought all idea of centralized authority, from which derives also the fifth point, his opposition to a hereditary crown, a dynasty. Sixth, he would never consent to a permanent standing army. To be sure, he knew that the glories of the reign of Boleslaw the Brave, 992-1025, issued from his force of 20,000 knights, but he also knew that a national standing army could be used by the king against the citizens and this he did not intend to permit, by the simple process of having no standing army. The Pole paid for this opposition to a standing army in coin he will never forget, or at least well remembers today, the loss of statehood in the 18th Century. Seventh, he was opposed to all military adventures abroad, the chief agency of which, he feared, would be a standing army in the hands of an ambitious king. He wished to be

called upon for no military service except in defence against invasion, and then only when and to the extent that he himself voted it. Finally, he was opposed to State initiative in economic matters, not because of some profound philosophical reason or theory of government, but for the practical reasons that he did not wish to be interfered with by the State, have the State in competition with him, or see the State in possession of economic power and authority. Points six and seven above are such clear-cut national political traditions that they will be the subjects of later sections of this chapter.

Naturally these negative theories of the State resulted in a whole congeries of national weaknesses, such as, in addition to the gradual disenfranchisement of the peasants and the townspeople, those even greater evils of utterly inadequate central authority, taxes, agencies for the preservation of the peace and the administration of justice, and forces for national defence or even for the suppression of lawlessness. There was freedom, indeed, but not what the British call "ordered freedom."

Positively, the Pole wanted liberty to rule his own home, estate, and land; go and come as he wished, including visits abroad; elect his rulers; make his own laws; outvote majorities; limit the privileged class of *szlachta* to those invited into it; worship and believe as he chose; be judged by his peers; reject laws and regulations proposed by the crown; maintain equality among the nobles; hold all the offices, dignities, and privileges; in short, be the State.

For these liberties, what did he propose to give in return? A relative guarantee of peace and order, and the military defence of the State. He *was* the State and

he was fully prepared to defend it. Prepared in willingness; not in arms and organization, tactics, and strategy. He first learned this fact when the invading Swedes walked right across his land in 1655 and 1656, to be expelled only at enormous cost of material and effort and suffering. The Pole of those centuries wanted unlimited privileges and very limited obligations. He loathed discipline, "the sister of freedom." He wanted to take the sweets of liberty and leave the bitter. To this great weakness, add his lack of group solidarity, social cement, national cohesion, or, as we would say in this day, national discipline. Splendid material, some of the world's finest, poorly bound together.

All these things all Poles know; they are part of the national political tradition. It lies within the possibilities of history that great lessons have been learned, to enter into the structure of the Poland now building; a hope I hold born not only of love of the Pole but of things seen.

To give a fairly complete picture of Poland's tradition of liberty, freedom, it seems well to name three more points. First, the great degree of freedom of speech granted to all in the old kingdom, even to the extent of freedom to rebuke the king in public. One of Poland's proud facts of history is Jan Zamoyski walking to the front of the hall in a meeting of Parliament, and publicly charging King Zygmunt III with serious faults and acts, a speech amounting almost to direct impeachment. Second, Poland's odd constitutional provision for legal rebellions, the so-called "confederations," whereby a large group of dissatisfied men could within the law organize what was simply armed revolt. A number of



these are on record, the last being the Bar Confederation of 1768, named after the city of Bar on the Dniester, and led by, among others, Count Kazimierz Pulaski, soon after to organize the American cavalry for General Washington and to die in battle at Savannah, Georgia, in 1779. The third point is this: Poland was the first country of Eastern or Central Europe to liberate its peasants from serfdom, 1794; the dates for other important countries are, Prussia 1823, Austria 1848, and Russia 1861.

### 3. "*Nic o nas bez nas*"

In the early 16th Century the large gentry class enunciated the principle "*nic o nas bez nas*," "nothing about us without us." It had reference to the relations of the *szlachta* to the Crown. During the decade following 1930 we have seen this old principle of interior relations taken from the shelf of history and elevated to the rank of one of the cardinal principles of Poland's foreign policy. It is the notice of a nation of 35,000,000 people to the nations of Western Europe that when discussing Polish matters, their decisions are effective only when Poland is consulted and is herself a partner to the decision. Whether or not Poland can enforce this principle is not the point now under discussion; here we note it as an old political tradition revived and given new content.

### 4. *Non-aggression*

There is a generally recognized Polish political tradition of non-aggression against other nations and their territories. To attribute this to national virtue would be naïve,

though the great hetman, Jan Tarnowski, did indeed say that foreign aggression was contrary to common sense and the Will of God; to ascribe it to laziness and indifference, lack of ambition, would be incorrect; to say that the Poles, frequently themselves the victims of aggression, became opposed to administering the medicine they had often had to take, would be a pleasant but not quite sophisticated interpretation of history. Whatever the explanation of this non-aggression policy, the objective facts are easily found.

They are found first in occasional statements by authoritative Polish spokesmen. The Tarnowski statement above quoted comes from the 16th Century; his attitude was taken up later in the same century by an equally great military leader, Jan Zamoyski, who refused to lead the Polish armies abroad against the Turks, even when the enterprise looked promising. Earlier in the century Zygmunt I had been asked to accept the crown of Hungary and Bohemia, and had replied, "Why wish to reign over several peoples when it is so difficult to contribute to the happiness of one?" In the 17th Century Jan Sobieski returned from his Vienna victory with great glory and moderate Turkish booty but no annexed territory. Several Polish kings had foreign ambitions, but these were not kings of Polish blood and tradition.

The statements of four modern Polish statesmen bear very directly upon our point. Poland's second post-war prime minister, Paderewski, in his pamphlet *Poland and Peace*, calls attention to the fact that of forty kings of Poland, only one was called "Great," Kazimierz, 1333-1370, and he was distinguished

war nor for aggression but as a lover of peace and conciliation, a builder and national organizer. The title "Great" given this one king by the Polish people is their stamp of approval upon his policy, this is the point Paderewski is emphasizing; continuing, he lauds Kazimierz's "wisdom, justice, and toleration."

A later prime minister, Alexander Skrzynski, said in 1925, "Poland was alone among the nations of Europe in the 15th and 16th Centuries, in achieving political expansion without bloodshed. During this period she doubled her population and increased her territory three-fold. This she accomplished by statesmanship, toleration, and liberalism; it was the result not of conquest and rapine but of common sympathy and a regard for mutual interest." He refers to the famous union of Lithuania and Poland, the culmination of successive treaties made in 1386, 1413, and 1569. Our third authority is Alexander Brückner, distinguished Polish scholar; he speaks of Poland as being proud that neither through war nor seizure had she enlarged her territories, and attributes this to the fact that the Pole was "deeply attached to his own land and not covetous of another's."

Finally we cite Eugene Kwiatkowski, vice-prime minister and minister of the treasury at the time this is written, holder of eight different cabinet posts in the course of the past fourteen years, and one of Poland's leading men in the area of national policy. In 1933 he closed a lecture in Warsaw with these sentences: "I believe that I am correctly understanding and rendering the feelings of the whole Polish community when I say that 99 per cent. at least of the Polish citizens desire to live and to work by the Law of Peace, that Poland



King Jan Sobieski, the deliverer of Vienna  
from the Turk in 1683, on a 10 zloty  
silver coin



The Polish Eagle on a 10 zloty  
silver coin



is not menacing any one of her neighbours, neither at present, nor in the future. We Poles, who in times of old used to be called 'the bulwark of western civilization,' had to experience during many centuries the sufferings of war. And it is not we who shall look for adventure and luck on this fatal road of crime." It is important to note that he followed this with a strong warning to other nations to attempt no aggression upon Poland in the expectation of encountering but slight resistance. The substance of all these declarations was put into a few words by Count Jerzy Potocki, Poland's Ambassador to the United States, in a speech delivered in Chicago, January 7, 1939, when he said, "We propose to continue living in peace, conscious of the fact that we claim nothing from others and that we will guard what rightfully belongs to us."

These four references give us the Polish tradition of old and of today. No aggression. Resistance to all attacks from without, but no adventures abroad. Beneath this attitude lie four facts of Polish psychology and history. Love of their own soil and desire to remain in peace upon it. No coveting of the soil of others or feeling that national pride and ambition require the theft of others' lands. Opposition to providing their king with a standing army lest he seek foreign conquest. Utter lack of interest in imperialism. Of these four historic attitudes only the third, that with regard to the army, has changed, and that for obvious contemporary reasons. The fourth, the attitude toward colonial territory, is changing, not because of imperial ambitions, but due to the necessity of finding some sort of solution of the pressing and growing problem of over-population;

but the attempt to solve that problem by military aggression would be a complete departure from national tradition and contrary both to the conscience and the mentality of the typical Pole.

One not knowing Polish history might here ask how, if the above is true, the Poles happen to be in such numbers in the Ukraine, both on the Polish and on the Russian side. Briefly, thus. Much of what is today south-eastern Poland became part of the Polish state when these lands fell to Kazimierz the Great in 1340 as next of kin when the line of the rulers of the so-called Kingdom of Halisz ran out; Galicia, the western name for this territory, places the Latin G in the place of the Ruthenian H. The rest of the Ukraine, with Podolia and Volhynia, became part of the new Poland formed by the 1569 union of Poland and the vast but unorganized Lithuania. These more eastern lands were then called, as we see on 16th and 17th Century maps, *Dzikie Pola*, "the wild fields," and Ukraine, "the border lands." They were uncultivated, largely empty, Tartar overridden frontier territories, Polish by law and right, settled and developed by Polish initiative, defended by Polish arms, peopled by a simple Ruthenian peasant population able to live and prosper because of Polish forts and Polish knights in armour. Its rich black soil is further enriched by the blood of tens of thousands of Polish soldiers who died holding these lands against Tartar hordes and Turkish armies. The Polish settlers who went there, chiefly after the early decades of the 16th Century, went into Polish lands, not as conquerors but as rightful owners with grants from their own rulers, not to dispossess others, but to civilize wild lands and

establish, with elbow room, the type of rural life dear to all Poles. All Americans know this frontier problem: it was the same in Poland after 1500, with no Red Indians to be dispossessed, but invading orientals to hold back. This is a romantic page of Polish history; we shall refer to it later as the basis of a noble tradition, that of the frontier.

### 5. *National Greatness*

The Poles have an authentic tradition of national greatness, a national memory of times when Poland was a mighty and far-extended power, in area one of the largest of European States, in interior organization possessing a might to be respected, in culture forward-moving and desirous of the best. This tradition hovers about the two dynasties which ruled Poland for several centuries each, Poland's only real dynasties—the Piast, arising into written history in 962, but older, no one knows how much, and ending with the reign of Kazimierz the Great, 1333-1370, and second, the Jagiello dynasty, 1386 to 1572, when Zygmunt August, the last of the line, died without issue.

Though Mieczyslaw, the first recorded Piast, was a strong and wise ruler, the real glory of the house was Boleslaw the Brave, Poland's first crowned king, 992-1025, who extended his rule north to the Baltic, east to the Bug River, and south to include the Carpathian Mountains and broad areas of the plains beyond. Of his brilliant career, Professor Slocombe writes that it "had no parallel in the history of contemporary Europe." His sister was the mother of England's famous King Canute, and his aunt was the mother of Hungary's



greatest king, and that nation's patron saint, Stephen. The many achievements of this remarkable ruler are the foundation stones of Poland's tradition of national greatness.

None of his descendants inherited his abilities, and after Boleslaw the dynasty made no great record until his descendant known as Lokietek began the restoration of Poland, work to be continued by his son, Kazimierz the Great. Five worthy lines of achievement were carried forward by this king, and the memory of them wipes out the previous three centuries of disunion and failure. First, Kazimierz secured peace, paying for it by the cession of Polish Silesia to Bohemia in 1335 but receiving compensation five years later by gains through inheritance in the east. Second, he began the replacing of wooden city walls and dwellings with brick, cement, and stone. Third, he helped establish far-flung commerce, making Poland a highway of the nations. Fourth, he furthered education, what is now the University of Krakow being created by him in 1364. And fifth, he did so much for the welfare of the peasants that he is often referred to as "the peasants' king." Achievement enough for one man, and leaving his House of Piast a pleasant memory in the mind of the Poles.

Sixteen years after Kazimierz's death a second great dynasty was launched with the marriage of Poland's Queen Jadwiga and Lithuania's Grand Duke Jagiello. This dynasty ruled rather well, and had the good fortune to end with two reigns regarded by the Poles as their "Golden Age," Zygmunt the Old, 1506-1548, Zygmunt August, 1548-1572. In its day this house had rulers on the throne not only of Poland and Lithuania, but also

of Hungary and of Bohemia, and the dynasty had created a monarchy which "seemed to bear in it the promise of empire." It would be easy to write at great length of this "Golden Age," liberal in rule, tolerant in religion, cultured in its quality, but here it suffices to speak of it as the high place in Polish history, the spot where the memory of the Pole most loves to dwell, the time in which the tradition of a great past finds both centre and culmination.

Four years after the death of Zygmunt August, Poland's greatest king was elected to the throne, the Hungarian Stefan Batory, 1576-1586. His death after ten brief years of reign was a national calamity, for he was by all accounts and tradition the most capable ruler ever to govern Poland. He effected many internal improvements, working with his extraordinarily able chancellor, Jan Zamoyski, and in foreign matters warred successfully with the Russian Czar, Ivan the Terrible, driving the invader out of Polish territory and back into Russia as far as Pskov where Ivan sued for peace. Thus the Golden Age of the Jagiellons was crowned with the notable reign of Batory, cap-sheaf of Poland's glories; after that came the three Vasa kings, not a dynasty, for each was elected by popular elections, and the glory faded.

But not suddenly, and not territorially; the vast extent of the Polish lands continued until the final partition of 1772 and included an area of 282,383 square miles. The area of Poland today is roughly 151,000 square miles. At its greatest Poland measured 390,000 square miles, and was the largest country in Europe. Naturally the memory of this greatness is part of the

Polish tradition. Every educated Pole knows that his country once included not only the restored lands of post-war Poland but what is today East Prussia, Lithuania, Latvia, much of Estonia, western parts of Russia proper, and all the Ukraine to Kiev and the Black Sea. It is a proud memory.

#### 6. *The national disaster*

After the high notes, the low. Fifteen years after the last of the Jagiellons had passed away, Zygmunt III, son of the King of Sweden, half Vasa and half Jagiello, was elected king, and with his ascension to the throne the decline of Poland began. Misfortune followed misfortune, preparing the way for the great final disaster of the partitions of Poland between Russia, Prussia, and Austria, leaving the names of the rulers who wrought this crime, Catherine the Great of Russia, Frederick the Great of Prussia, and Maria Theresa of Austria, hated by the Poles. Out of these partitions of 1772, 1793, and 1795, and the disappearance of Poland from the map, grew the sad Polish tradition of the national disaster.

The facts are one thing; their explanation and hence the tradition another. Two schools of thought arose around these historic events. The so-called "Krakow school" of historians, to use Professor Dyboski's words, "makes all Polish history a dreary record of fateful shortcomings and faults, leading to ruin." With excessive but true Slavic introspection these students looked within to find the causes of Poland's downfall, searched out and laid open every sore spot in Polish history, and found the causes of national decline in the errors of the Polish constitution, the shortcomings in the national

character, and the mistakes of the rulers and leaders of the nation. The result was a dark tradition indeed. Other historians preferred to find the causes of the partitions in the imperialistic ambitions and immoral international politics of their expanding neighbours, the "Drang nach Osten," and the failure of the rest of Europe to check the despoilers.

The tradition is now taking a form which embodies all the elements of truth of each of these schools; the full facts are looked in the face, and an understanding of the nation's decline and fall is sought which leaves no element out of consideration that has something to teach for the present and for the future. Not all place the emphasis on the same elements, all are not equally fearless in locating blame where it belongs and in accepting explanations; but in the back of every Pole's mind is the memory of the nation's undoing and a tradition which says "this thing must not happen again."

#### 7. *Western orientation*

Returning to England from Persia via Russia and the Continent in 1926, V. Sackville-West writes thus of her arrival in Poland: "It was warm and the grain was growing; the farms and homesteads looked prosperous, not unlike English farms; it was pleasant to come back to spring after Russia, where spring had not yet broken, and to see rural Poland thus unexpectedly, instead of keeping to the beaten track. It was a rolling landscape, with clumps of dark firs on the sky-line, well-kept roads, gates painted a clean white; after Persia and Russia I felt that I was really back in Europe."

Yes! for Poland faces west, and has regarded this as

its true and proper orientation ever since Mieczyslaw I accepted Christianity in its Latin instead of its Eastern Orthodox form in 966. I had not been in Poland long before I learned that this is no light matter and is indeed a living element in the Polish tradition. Early in my Polish experience a three-hour interview was arranged for me with that broadly informed expert on certain aspects of Polish life, Count Puslowski of Krakow. Of the many things he said to me that day nothing remains in my memory more vividly than his earnestly spoken words: "Poland is not the most western of the eastern nations; it is the most eastern of the western nations." This identification of itself with the west, this feeling of being western and desire to be western, this actual western orientation of Poland, its westernness notwithstanding eastern influences, is a fact in Polish life, history, and culture, so potent in its power and important in its results that one must regard it as a tradition of very creative significance. To explore and elaborate this tradition would require more space than is available just here, but to state it is essential. Poland took from the west and carried its western culture east; from the east it took comparatively little, seeing that these were influences rather to resist than to yield to.

Just what "the west" means has been clearly and succinctly stated by the Hungarian writer Aurel Kolnai in a recent book. By "western" one means "society with a free constitution and self-government under recognized rules, where law is king," "public bodies ruled on lines of rational ethics," "a heightened appreciation of human personality and individual conscience," "the main religious impulse behind this process being

Christianity," "Roman legal order and the rationalization of property relationships which it embodied," "men behaving as members of universal mankind," "that stability which makes freedom practicable," "individual liberty and freedom or organization," "democracy," and Christ superior to Caesar. "Eastern," in Central Europe, is no word to conjure with; it summons visions of disorganization, resignation, inefficiency, tyranny, indifference, and a low state of civilization. No wonder Poland proclaims that "Poland faces west," and lives as part of western culture.

#### 8. *The army*

A Pole once said to me proudly, "The Polish Army has never met defeat at the hands of the Germans." I have tried to check this up, and the statement appears to be correct. The Poles defeated the Germans in the two great battles in which they have crossed swords, Plowce 1331 and Grunwald 1410. There appear to have been no other major battles. The Poles are proud of their army and its traditions of bravery, devotion, and victory. Not universal victory, for at the hands of the Swedes, Muscovites, Tartars, and Turks it has met disastrous defeats, as well as won success; but it has a long and glorious tradition of courage, knightly valour, and hard fighting.

This army has had the usual evolution of the armies of Europe. In pre-feudal and feudal days it was composed of the armed landowners, their partly trained or even professional retainers, and a miscellaneous assortment of peasants variously armed. Poland's wars were largely wars against mounted invaders, hence both by



primitive Slavic tribes which later united to form the Polish nation as having occupied western Poland as early as seven hundred years before Christ.

The most picturesque of the old tribal traditions is that of the three brothers, Lech, Czech, and Rus, who roamed Eastern Europe until the latter two settled in those lands bearing their names, while Lech settled in that part of Poland near Poznan and became the father of the Poles. He is said to have chosen the site on which the city of Gniezno now stands, and soon finding there a nest of white eagles, called his settlement Gniezno, from *gniazdo*, "nest," and adopted the white eagle, still Poland's emblem, as his tribal symbol. This is of course pure fiction; the name Gniezno may even come from the fact that the site was the residence of a *kniaz*, an early Slavic ducal title; the fiction, however, is in line with the main historic fact of ancient Slavic occupation of these lands, the recent excavations in Gniezno taking that Polish settlement back to about A.D. 700. They also reveal as a fallacy the theory of the consolidation of the Polish state under Viking influence and show that these Slav towns far pre-date any possible German influence. In A.D. 700 the Germans were west of the Elbe.

Here, in pre-history, one has to say Slavic and not Polish; the Polish nation is a consolidation of the early Slavic tribes known, using the Polish form, as Wislanie, Mazowszanie, Kujawianie, Leczycanie, Sieradzanie, Opolanie, Slazanie, Dziadoszanie, the organizing Polanie centering near Poznan, the latter added Pomorzanie, others less important, and the very closely related Kaszubie.



de-Polonize a Pole. The Poles, traditionally and in often verified fact, are a most coherent national group, famously tenacious of their national characteristics. This, of course, refers only to the true Polish group; some 30 per cent. of the population of Poland is non-Polish in origin.

### 3. *Resistance of the "Drang nach Osten"*

From a lecture delivered by the distinguished German historian Professor Bernhard Schmeidler and published in 1925, we quote a few dramatic sentences. "Their attention [he refers to the powerful Ottonian family], like that of the whole Saxon aristocracy, was turned to the east, their vision directed across the Elbe. In the east, across the Elbe, were the Slavs, split into many small tribes, a scorned and hated people, and here were possibilities of fame and gain. A bloody, pitiless, unbelievably gruesome border struggle between Slav and Saxon fills the years between the 9th and 12th Centuries, until finally the Saxon forces break through the frontier, cross the Elbe under Lothar and Henry the Lion, and carry out the great mediaeval task of the colonization of the German east."

"The German east," of course, was the vast Slav-inhabited area east of the Elbe, against which from roughly A.D. 800 until today the German has pressed in his historic and ruthless "Drang nach Osten." This seed has borne its due fruit, timeless distrust by the Pole of his aggressive and oppressing German neighbour, and a thousand-year-old knowledge that only by arms, never by right alone, can he hold back the German from seizing Polish land. The main boundary line



*Jan Jaroszyński*

View of the Carpathian Mountains (Tatra) from the Pieniny Range



between Germany and Poland was established more or less as it is today by the year A.D. 1466, but to the north along the Baltic the Teutons forced their way into what is now East Prussia, practically exterminated the native population whose name, oddly, they took, and came there into full possession in 1660.

In 1772 Frederick II took the lands which had for centuries been Poland's northernmost and maritime province; in 1793 his successor took Danzig; in 1795, in the last of the three partitions, the original Polish soil of Poznan and its related provinces were lost by Poland to Prussia. These lands were restored to Poland at the time of its rebirth in November 1918, but the tradition of Germany as the enemy of a thousand years of history is fully and permanently established. There is today peace between Poland and Germany, for Poland is powerful, and there is commerce, but there is neither love nor trust, nor on the Polish side can there ever be until the memory of a thousand years of attack, dispossession, and oppression is eradicated by many many years of honourable dealing on the part of Germany. Such dealing the Poles hope for, but history does not justify them in a very lively expectation.

#### 4. *The bulwark against the east*

But not all the Pole's troubles came from the west, grievous as those were; on his east a far-flung open frontier invited frequent invasion from the restless and marauding nations moving into Europe from Asia, chiefly the Tartars, but also the Turks. Not often have I asked you to look at the map. Please now take a map of Europe, one showing topographical features, and see

how the Carpathian Mountains rise from the plains in the south of Poland, reach a height of 6000 feet, sweep across the whole southern length of Poland, head down through Roumania, and extend at no small height clear down to the Danube River. As the Asiatic hordes bore westward these impeding mountains turned them north and across the plains and foothills of Poland between the Carpathians and the Great Pripet Marshes 150 miles north.

The Tartars came in countless thousands, destroying everything in their path, and leaving Southern Poland a smoking ruin. The first of these invasions was led by Batu, Genghis Khan's grandson and able general. Burning Krakow the Tartars rushed on as far as the province of Silesia, where the Polish duke, Henry the Pious, met them with a strong force, defeated them at Liegnitz, and turned them south and back, losing his life in the battle. But this was only the first of the Tartar invasions. There followed scores and scores of them, met always by the Poles, earning for them their proud name of "Bulwark Against the East" and the fame of being "the eastern rampart of Christianity," establishing at the same time one of the proudest of the Polish traditions, that of being the guardian of Europe, European civilization, and the Christian faith in its eastern extension; a tradition which was the first it was called upon to vindicate and justify when, even before it had time to reorganize its regained freedom, it had to meet and turn back, at awful cost, the furious Bolshevik invasion of 1919 and 1920.

After the Tartars, the Turks, and partly overlapping in time. As the Turkish armies increasingly moved

into Europe and spread north and west they became a matter of concern to Poland. The young Polish king, Wladyslaw III, led a combined Polish, Hungarian, and Wallachian army against them at Varna on the Black Sea, only to have his army utterly annihilated and to lay down his life in battle against this terrible menace to Christianity; that was November 10, 1444, nine years before the Turks took Constantinople. The Poles met the Turks successfully two centuries later in three great battles, at Chocim in 1621, again at Chocim in 1673, and at Vienna in 1683, Sobieski's famous victory.

The facts of geography and history laid a heavy responsibility upon the Pole as guardian of these eastern ramparts of Europe; the way in which he met and fulfilled that unsought honour and obligation is one of the most glorious of his traditions.

#### 5. *The tradition of the Kresy*

That part of Poland which has most stirred my imagination is not its fine old cities, not its magnificent mountains, and not its great rolling Vistula River, much as something within me responds to each of these. The part of Poland which has gripped me as has no other is its eastern frontier, the so-called Kresy, the plural of the word *kres*, meaning "limit." I have seen the Kresy at many points, from Molodeczno on the north down to the very tip of the south-eastern toe, the Trenches of the Holy Trinity, where the Roman Emperor Trajan built his protective earthworks in the early part of the 2nd Century A.D., and where today we look across the Dniester and see Roumania and across the Zbrucz and see Soviet Russia, knowing that near us to the right

lies the mighty ruin of the castle at Chocim and at our left, also only a few miles away, the old Polish fortress on the almost impregnable rock of Kamieniec Podolski, once a veritable centre of romance, now only a drab city in the Russia of the Soviets.

Every inch of this frontier is historic, with a mighty appeal to any American who knows his own west, which this east so much resembles, not indeed in geographical detail, but in historical significance and national idea. I literally tingle with interest as I travel its broad plains and steppes, skirt or penetrate its spacious Marshes of Pinsk, and remember the romantic past of this eastern frontier and the classic role it has played in Polish history. Here and beyond, in the 14th and succeeding centuries, Poland heroically fulfilled its "civilizing mission in eastern Europe," to use Dyboski's words, and here today the frontier struggle with primitive conditions continues as the Ruthenians, the ancient ethnic groups of this area, are helped into the modern civilization from which for a century and a half they were withheld by the strong hand of the retarding Russian Czars.

The very geological conditions are exciting here; the rolling hills or sandy plains of the north disappear as from Wilno we proceed south toward the Pinsk and Pripet Marshes, and then, at Krzemieniec, rise to the high steppes of Podolia, broad, almost treeless, cut here and there with deep ravines in which we find the scattered settlements, down off the steppes and near running water. Locate Luck, not pronounced as it looks but as Wootsk; here, a tablet in the city museum tells us, over forty Tartar invasions broke against the high castle walls; eighty miles to the south ran the "Czarny Szlak,"

the "Black Trail," over which time and again the Tartars rushed into Poland, leaving indeed a black trail behind them; the Czarny Szlak passed through Zbaraz, of great military fame, the city which brilliantly but not successfully resisted the fierce siege of 1649; the story is told in Henry Sienkiewicz's *With Fire and Sword*, chapters lvii. to lxii.; the trail led on to Lwow, gateway to the east and to the west, focus of all these attacks, the Lemberg of the Great War, a city with eight centuries of thrilling history; the place, one might say, where the Kresy begins, twin sister in this respect with Wilno, due north 340 miles and 51 miles farther east.

This broad stretch of eastern frontier—in all it is 550 miles long, over 100 miles deep, and before 1772 included the Ukraine—has a spirit and tradition of its own, of great importance in Polish history and psychology. It is more easily sensed than described; its component elements are pioneer courage and hardiness, virility, devoted patriotism, and sense of social obligation, a readiness for and understanding of social service. The fact of the Poles through long centuries being the landowners, organizers, recognized leaders, and true civilizers of the simple Ruthenian peasants has tended to produce just these qualities. When I meet a Pole from the Kresy I take it for granted that he possesses these characteristic qualities, and I am not often disappointed. From this stock have come many of the noblest names in Polish history. Just to know that a Pole is from the Kresy creates a certain expectation of him, an expectation he is loath to disappoint. |

To set this matter forth more fully or clearly, I would



say that the Vistula population, the Krakow, Sandomierz, and Warsaw Poles, are the physical spine of the nation due to the country's geographical structure and ethnic history after A.D. 1400. To the west the German influence has had a certain and inevitable effect, but to the east, geography, history, and ethnic contacts have tended to make the Poles only more Polish, to bring out and reinforce the best in them, and to develop their most sturdy virtues. Poznan may have more bath-tubs, Warsaw more money, and Krakow more Latin; the Pole of the eastern half of the country has more Polishness, more of what seems to me to be the basic Polish traits.

#### 6. *Poland a crossroads of the nations*

Poles who know the history of the country well, know that from time immemorial it has been a highway of the nations and a crossroads for travellers to and from many lands. Its geographical location and the nature of its terrain have made this inevitable. The Carpathian Mountains bounding it on the south and swinging down across Roumania turn traffic east and west over Polish roads. No mountains impede travel from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and the low watershed between the rivers flowing into each make both land and water routes possible between these two inland oceans. A glance at a map of Europe, and one sees the whole situation. Poland was the great highway east and west; it was also one of the great highways north and south. Even the Carpathians opened up at the Moravian Gates and made a path into the north for travellers from the Mediterranean lands.

Ancient history tells us that the amber trade route, when North Sea amber began to fail, about 700 B.C., shifted from the Elbe and the Weser to the Vistula. All through the Middle Ages Poland was an active route from Asia to all western points. "When the ancient route to the east was closed after the fall of the Byzantine Empire, the western merchants carried on their trade with Asia through Poland," says Joseph Statkowski in his *Poland, Old and New*.

This being a great route meant two things to Poland, conflict and commerce. It was the basis of no few of her wars, it was also the basis of her trade. In neither of these respects has the situation changed; Poland is a crossroads of the nations today, for good and for evil, and this, too, is a Polish tradition, ancient and modern.

### 7. *Poland and the sea*

Few if any geographical-political ideas play a more important role in the statesmanship of the Polish Government today and of all well-informed Poles than their strong conviction of the necessity of their access to the sea over their own territories and through their own port. As the present Polish Minister of the Treasury put it six years ago, "A Poland really free, that is, politically and economically free, can only exist if possessed of a real access to the sea, an access of her own." This conviction is the basis of the policy called "the Baltic Orientation of Poland." The story and the theory of this policy are each interesting.

As far back as Charlemagne it was realized in Central Europe that access to the Baltic was the basis of economic and political existence, and in 789 that great king of the



and leaders were so engaged in defending their land frontiers that sea policy, though its importance was realized, took a second place. However, the growing amalgamation of Poland and Lithuania through the successive agreements of 1386, 1410, 1413, and 1569 was advocated by the Poles because of a realization of the importance of keeping Prussia and Russia from shutting her off from the sea. The advance of Prussia led Lithuania to union with Poland; that of the 16th Century Czars of Muscovy moved the lands now called Latvia and Estonia into similar treaties with Poland, giving Poland access to the sea through a variety of ports from Danzig to Riga. Zygmunt August and Stefan Batory both had definite marine policies.

But though Poland had ports, it never developed a fleet of any size, either merchant or war, and this was a source of weakness; its shipping was in foreign ships and in foreign hands. Its Baltic-flowing rivers made its rulers realize that inland sea as having both economic and political significance of a first order, but the necessity of repeated and continual land defence of open frontiers east and west and Poland's lack of centralized government kept it from securing this obvious interest; these facts, plus the other great one, that the Poles were primarily an agricultural people.

All the Baltic lands competed for the control of that sea during the 16th, 17th, and 18th Centuries, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, and Russia under Peter the Great, then Prussia under the Fredericks. In this latter era only English influence prevented the Baltic from becoming a Russian lake. The agrarianism and political unwisdom of the Polish szlachta in the 17th and 18th Centuries

resulted in Poland dropping out of the contest. In the 19th Century there was no Poland, and that brings us down to the present post-war period.

The Treaty of Versailles left Danzig a Free City, with its foreign policy, railroads, and customs area in Polish hands. The events of the Bolshevik invasion of 1920, when Poland learned through sad experience that in time of war it had no port, led Polish statesmen to seek some other solution of the problem of access to the sea, and at Gdynia, which in 1921 was but a small fishing village, there arose the great modern port of Gdynia with today 130,000 inhabitants and one of the finest and most up-to-date port equipments in the world, making it already the fourth port of northern Europe, led only by Rotterdam, Hamburg, and Antwerp, and leaving far behind in tonnage cleared the ports of Danzig, Libau, Lubeck, Stettin, Riga, Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Bremen. The figures for 1938 were 9,173,487 tons of freight entered and cleared, and 43,205 passengers embarked and disembarked.

Both ports, Danzig and Gdynia, are needed to serve Poland's foreign trade, 80 per cent. of the commerce with other lands passing through these ports. In this trade Danzig is playing a decreasing role, and for very clear reasons, chief among which are Danzig's disloyalty to her agreements with Poland and her constant work against Polish interests, the natural desire of the Poles to develop their own port and their pride in its marvellous growth, the anti-Polish policies of the Nazi Party in Danzig, and Danzig's treatment of the Jews, driving millions of dollars of commerce from Danzig to more tolerant cities, much of the foreign trade of Danzig

having been in Jewish hands. The more Danzig is dominated by Germany the less important it becomes as a port and city, a fact with two centuries of demonstration behind it.

It seems necessary to relate all this to get the historical, geographical, economic, and political background of Poland's seaward and Baltic tradition, a most important and growing one, and to these must be added Poland's westward cultural orientation in which the sea and especially the Baltic also has its significance.

The sea, to the Poles, means ten things: 1, access to the outer world over Polish territories; 2, freedom, both economic and political; 3, the natural terminus of the rivers, three-fourths of Poland's surface water flowing into the Baltic; 4, the way out for its lumber, coal, grain, animal products, and manufactured goods; 5, an unimpeded way in for whatever it cares to import and whomever it cares to admit; 6, its means of contact, cultural, commercial, and military, with Poles abroad; 7, a harbour for its commercial and war fleet; 8, a port for its new and growing deep-sea fishing fleet; 9, a vacation place on its own salt water; 10, the romance and fascination of the sea itself, a growing sentiment in Poland.

The Poles know the importance of the sea, but they have also taken account of what sea orientation costs; in time, many years; in money, millions; and in personal qualities, if they would develop their own fleets and overseas commerce, "business efficiency, prudence, commercial caution, perseverance, ability to execute long-term plans, ambition to expand, and administrative ability." They expect to meet these requirements.

As a boundary the Poles regard their southern mountains as but a passive force; their land frontiers as either neutral or only too active in a negative sense, a door to invasion; but their short sea-coast they regard as a living, an active boundary, a positive force, and of national significance far exceeding its length. They know that the road to it is over lands Polish beyond the memory of man; they will neither yield these lands and this coast nor trade them for anything else, a proposal sometimes advanced by romancers in international politics. The Pole is permanently welded to his sea and the adjacent Pomorzian provinces.

An active factor in creating this new maritime orientation is the "Sea Festival." Among the Poles, always an agricultural people, the big social holiday of the rural year was the annual Harvest Home Festival in August, just after the grain harvests were in. The "Dożynki," as it is called, was one of the most characteristic of the popular folk customs. It is of high significance that its place in national importance has during the past few years been taken by "Dzien Morski," "Sea Day," celebrated across the whole land as the holiday and festival typifying the new interest of all Poland in its sea front.

#### 8. *The Lithuanian tradition*

Time and again Lithuania has figured in these pages; it must now figure here again, for the relations of these two countries, bound together for all time by geography and united for centuries in law and in history, are so interesting, unique, and vital that the Lithuanian tradition is among Poland's foremost. But do not think of

Lithuania as the small and compact country it is today; in the 14th Century it was a far-flung, one might almost say empire, a curious expanse won by the warlike Lithuanians by conquest and held together by the weakest of ties and but an inconsiderable number of Lithuanians. Against neither the Teutonic Knights nor the advancing Muscovites could this country maintain itself, and increasingly its leaders saw that its only hope lay in union with Poland, an arrangement mutually advantageous and brought about by a series of treaties, as has been said, from 1386 to 1569, and lasting until the first partition of 1772.

That the Lithuania reborn after the war could find no basis of agreement with Poland until new necessities again argued such a friendly relation was no fault of either but a fault of their very pre-partition unity and amalgamation. But deeper than the post-war disharmony between Poland and Lithuania, now happily decreasing and giving promise of disappearing, has been the Pole's age-long respect for that land and nation, his feeling that Lithuanian and Pole in a peculiar way belong to each other, and his sensing of the mutuality of their history, religion, experience, and interests. The fact that for over a hundred years many of Poland's greatest leaders, both in war and in peace, have been men and women born on Lithuanian soil, and often having Lithuanian blood in their veins, has urged most powerfully for concord and has laid deep foundations for what is an abiding thing in Poland, the Lithuanian tradition.

To recite the events, explain the causes, name the persons that occasion and constitute this tradition would



carry us far beyond our possible limits of space, but to speak of that tradition, as an important and creative element in Polish life and history, is absolutely essential.

9. *The place of certain cities in the Polish tradition*

One has to live in Poland but a little time to realize that part of the Polish tradition is bound up with certain cities. It would be odd indeed to write about the relation of geography to tradition in Poland and not devote at least a few paragraphs to the tradition of such historic towns as Krakow, Czestochowa, Lwow, and Wilno. We run the risk, to be sure, of being asked why not write also of the tradition of Gniezno, of Poznan, Zamosc, Lublin, Grodno, and a dozen other places. The answer is, that after one mentions the first four above, there are, worse luck to an author seeking reasonable brevity, at least a dozen or more places about which one should write. But the existence of the many shall not keep us from attention to the few.

Krakow is the very soul of the nation, by all tradition. Its architecture, art, culture, history, the very nature of its people, have made it such for centuries. It was the focal point of the Golden Age, the residence of Poland's greatest kings, the scene of many of its glories. It is famous in all the arts, and equally celebrated in popular speech and folklore. Thousands of Poles who do not know the saying about Rome know that "Krakow was not built in a day." He who asks too full instructions is told that "The way to Krakow is in your mouth," ask as you go. All that Athens was to Greece and very likely even more, Krakow is, and has for centuries been, to Poland. At one time Poles referred to it as "the

second Rome." Special sentiment attaches to it as the one Polish city in which Poles could speak, work, and write during the time of the partitions without interference from the Russian censor or the Prussian oppressor, and from Krakow, on August 6, 1914, the small but heroic force under Pilsudski marched forth to Kielce to do battle with the Russian Empire; and eventually—only truth can be so utterly fantastic—these very men triumphed. So for a thousand reasons, old and new, the Krakow tradition is one of Poland's greatest, something to which, in the true words of a modern Pole, "every foreigner sensitive to the greatness and beauty of the work of the human spirit must surrender."

The tradition of Czestochowa is patriotism tried to the last drop of blood, of sacredness due both to historic associations and to its famous Madonna; in Czestochowa took place Poland's rebirth during the Swedish invasion of 1655.

Of Wilno Poles think as their outpost of Latin civilization over against Orthodox Russia and the primitive cultural conditions of the frontier. Its many churches and old monasteries gave it a religious atmosphere, carried forward today by the beautiful Madonna of the Ostra Gate. It is a burial place of kings and queens. But, even more, it is the place where the poet-patriot Mickiewicz studied, where he wrote, whence he was sent from his homeland a political exile; Stefan Batory founded its university in 1580; the great Polish historian Lelewel taught there, as did also the scientist Sniadecki. Pilsudski studied there and there his heart lies buried at the feet of the body of his mother. A hundred things make it a sacred place, a sentiment reinforced by the

special charm of the older quarter and by the famous kindness and hospitality of its people.

Lwow, of course, is the city upon which fell many invasions. Its honour as a defender of Polish lands and people received a special crowning of glory when, in 1919, even the school children took arms and helped defend the city against the Ukrainians. It has been Polish since 1340, and is thus one of the very oldest of the large Polish cities. The special tradition in regard to Lwow is as the centre of the eastern defence against Tartar and Turk.

And Warsaw? It is an old city. Its now partly uncovered and restored city walls go back to the 13th Century. It has been the capital of Poland since 1596. Seven important routes of the mediaeval world passed through it, the geographer Janowski says, and it was in the very nature of things that Warsaw should become a great city, a destiny embodied in the reality of today, a city of 1,300,000 inhabitants, and in the obvious promise of the future so vividly set forth in the 1938-39 exhibit in the National Museum under the title "Warsaw: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow."

But the place of Warsaw in the national tradition came only with the late 18th Century. Here was adopted the new constitution of May 3, 1791. Here the Poles made their last stand in the fateful 1794 uprising against Russia. In Warsaw arose and from Warsaw spread the insurrections of 1830 and 1863. The whole 19th-Century struggle against the Russian oppression had its heart and centre in Warsaw. Thus it earned its place in the Polish tradition.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# THE PLACE OF OTHER NATIONS IN THE POLISH TRADITION

### 1. *The plan of this chapter*

This chapter aims to answer such questions as, What is the traditional attitude of Poles toward France? What influence has the German nation had upon the Polish tradition? What role has Italian civilization played in the formation of Polish culture? The threads from which the chapter is woven are of three kinds: first, the historic connections or relations of Poland with each of the countries discussed; second, the nature of the influences each country had upon Polish life; and third, the traditional attitude of the Poles toward each of the countries with which as a nation they have had most experience.

This third matter being our real theme, aspects of the Polish tradition, only as much of the first two, history and influences, will be given as is necessary to a fair understanding of the origin and background of the tradition. As too sharp analysis would tend both to lengthen our discussion and make the discourse jerky, we shall not separate the three threads mentioned above too carefully, but shall weave rather than segregate them. It may also be well to observe that here considerable selection and brevity are necessary in order to keep within the limits of a normal chapter our treatment of a subject which could well be the substance of a whole book.

One does not live in Poland long before he discovers that the Poles have an intense interest in and curiosity about other countries. When one digs into Polish literature he finds that this attitude has a long history, becoming very active soon after the opening of the 16th Century and resulting in protracted journeys abroad both for study and for the simple observation of new and strange things, and in an eager questioning of foreign visitors to Poland. The characteristic open-mindedness of the Pole to good ideas from any source made these journeys and conversations not mere experiences of passing interest but led to the adoption with adaptation of much that was seen and heard.

Thus when growing wealth in Poland and the stirring of potent intellectual movements throughout Europe threw an expanded world open to the Poles they became great travellers and wanderers, returning home with new ideas as to laws, manners, government, architecture, art, literature, and all the interests of life. Students going abroad took notes; no few travellers kept diaries. All returned to Poland with their receptive minds stimulated to new ways and departures. This had its obvious good side; it had a side less good also. Some came back "with an empty pocket and a turned head." Foreign clothes were affected, foreign words and phrases used to excess. Gornicki in *Dworzanin Polski* says that if they had been to Italy they with every other word used "signor," if in France they said "par ma foi," and if in Spain, "nos otros cavaglieros." But our point just now is not to assess good and bad but merely to record the fact of these foreign influences and Polish receptivity to them.

All these contacts were voluntary, the results of the Poles' desire to go abroad. There were abundant other contacts also, due to foreigners coming to Poland, some on peaceful missions of religion, diplomacy, commerce, and art, others as the invading hordes which so often interrupted the quiet course of Polish life. The total of all these one finds today in the Polish tradition as to each country now to be taken up.

2. *The Latin nations : France ; Italy ; Ancient Rome*

Notwithstanding the many miles of distance lying between Poland and France in mediaeval times, we find French influences important in Polish life as early as the 11th and 12th Centuries, when French Benedictine and Cistercian monks began to arrive in Poland to take part in teaching this newly Christian nation the Christian truth and its implications, bringing with them not only religion but the arts and architecture. The political role of France in Poland began to be significant chiefly after 1500; during the century then opening France was seen as an offset against the distrusted Austrian Habsburgs, and Polish statesmen tended to divide into an Austrian and a French grouping. These latter prevailed and in 1573 elected Henry of Valois king of Poland.

The next century saw two French queens of Poland, the wife of Wladyslaw IV and the wife of Jan Sobieski, each of these dynamic women bringing marked French influence into Polish life. The 18th Century opens in Poland with an elected Saxon king on the throne, a man whose chief ambition in life was to be thought a northern reflection of his contemporary Louis XIV of France; his reign was punctuated by incidents created by

Stanislaw Leszczyński, twice king of Poland, the second time but briefly, 1733, by which time his daughter had become the Queen of France as the wife of Louis XV; this also was a time of strong French influence in Poland. Thirty years later Stanislaw Poniatowski came to the Polish throne, a man whose culture and way of life was French, though politically he was completely under the domination of Russia. During his thirty-one-year reign, until 1795, French art, literature, architecture, costumes, and many things French were uppermost in Poland, including, in some circles, the repercussions of the French Revolution.

During the Napoleonic period, when Poland hoped for freedom at Bonaparte's hands, the French influence in Poland was enormous. Tens of thousands of Poles died in battle for Napoleon, their hope, among them King Stanislaw's nephew, Prince Joseph Poniatowski, Marshal of France, acme of Poland's modern chivalry, defender, till his death, of Napoleon's retreat from Leipzig. All through the 19th Century Poland looked to France for aid and sympathy, and the political exiles from partitioned Poland made Paris their second home. During the Great War thousands of Poles wore the horizon-blue uniform of the French Army, and when Marshal Pilsudski needed technical aid in organizing and staffing the Polish Army during the Bolshevik invasion, it was France who sent a military mission to render this aid, led by General Weygand, Marshal Foch's own chief of staff.

All these centuries Polish young men were going to Paris to study, and French became every educated Pole's second language. Through such names and great

personages as Chopin the musician, a Pole whose father was of French origin, Lelewel the historian, doing much of his work in French, and the great scientist Madame Curie-Sklodowska, Polish with a French husband, these two countries developed cultural ties of great power. Dominant French thinkers such as August Comte and Descartes gained a wide following in Poland, and all the distinguished French men and women of letters secured an extensive reading among the Poles.

These paragraphs scarcely touch the fringe of an extensive subject, the nature and extent of the influence of France upon Polish life and thought for nearly two centuries. Consider all the areas of this influence: religion, art, politics, war language, literature, costume, drama, comedy, music, cooking; indeed, where are these evidences of French culture and life *not* found in Poland? It is these age-long contacts in every sphere of life which are the basis of the Polish tradition as to France. To the Pole the French are the European masters of the art of life; they are ancient allies in war and in politics; they are for all the centuries the pioneers in culture, science, and art; they are profoundly looked up to in many things and regarded as among Poland's most valued friends. The Poles, on the other hand, know that the contribution has been reciprocal, and that France would be poorer in no few respects were it not for the part that Poles have played in the land of their ancient ally.

The influences of Latin civilization upon Polish life and thought had three main sources—French, Italian, and Ancient Rome, thinking here of nations only, for the Catholic Church was of course one of the most potent



of the Latin determinants of the nature and direction of Polish culture. So important were these Latin influences that those who know the Poles well sometimes refer to them as the Latin Slavs. Knowing both Europe and the Poles this seems to me to be a correct designation. Of the part France played in this Latinizing of the Poles we have given indication; we now turn to that of Italy, and examine briefly the roots of the deep traditional sympathy Poles have for the Italian people and culture.

Late in the 15th Century, as material and intellectual conditions in general rose to a higher level in Poland, the eyes of the Polish nobles began to turn toward Italy. Into their midst came the talented Italian humanist Filip Buonacorsi-Kallimach, bringing both the data and the spirit of the new learning; by the time of his death in 1496 he had seen the Italian Renaissance take permanent roots in the land of his adoption. In 1506 Zygmunt Stary came to the throne, and in 1518 this king married Bona Sforza of the famous Italian family of that name, a mature woman of twenty-five. She was beyond all doubt one of the most capable queens ever to sit on a Polish throne. In her train and partly due to her initiative there set in a regular stream of Italian artists, architects, courtiers, scholars, merchants, and artisans flowing toward Poland, and soon the counterpart of this movement began, in the increasing number of journeys of Poles to Italy—courtiers, students, scholars, clerics, diplomats, statesmen, tourists, and pilgrims. Scores of Poles studied in the universities of Padua, Rome, and Bologna.

Naturally the Poles acquired a taste for the classic, began to look upon Italy in a new way, studied and

admired its ancient heritage, its organization, its way of life, social refinement, magnificent architecture, beautiful art, skilful industry, its independent and profound thought, and its establishment of religion. Many learned the Italian language and used it.

When, late in the century, Catholic humanism displaced the true humanism, these enlightening influences suffered an eclipse, but the flow of pilgrims, students, diplomats and ecclesiastics suffered no special diminution until the early 18th Century decay of Polish life set in. But after the third partition of 1795 Poles went to Italy in great numbers, seeking refuge in its cities, and finding in a mutual aversion for Austria and a longing for freedom from that country's oppression a strong bond of sympathy. They fought in each other's revolutions, and in the shedding of blood in a common cause created new ties. Today the Polish language is taught in Italian universities and the language of the Italians in the universities of Poland. When Poles visit the Vatican one of the most important pictures to meet their eyes is that of their great historical painter Matejko portraying the honour done their king Jan Sobieski just after his victory over the Turks before Vienna.

If we seek now to classify the influences of Italy upon Poland and to state the nature of these Italian influences upon the Polish tradition we begin by indicating how the attraction of Italy helped Poland both to gain and retain its westward orientation when the pressure of eastern culture, through the Byzantine Empire and later, was considerable; how Italy helped Poland acquire both Latin culture and the western spirit, and brought it vital elements both of illumination and of a way of life and

thought through the introduction of the Renaissance, humanism, and the spirit of classicism. From such commonplace things as kinds of food to the more elaborate matters of vocabulary, through all the exchanges of civilized life and through no small amount of intermarriage, Italy has for five centuries affected the Polish tradition; it is both natural and just that those elements of Italian culture which the Poles have incorporated into their own should give Italy a real place in Polish regard.

From Renaissance Italy to ancient Rome is an easy transition. For obvious chronological reasons the Rome of antiquity had no contemporary influence upon Poland, but beginning with the 15th Century and extending into the 16th and 17th Centuries the bearing of the culture and ideas of old Rome upon life in Poland and upon the Polish tradition is enormous. It was Republican Rome, the Rome of Scipio, Cicero, and of Horace, the Rome of the three centuries before Christ, to which the Polish nobles of the 15th and 16th Centuries turned for models, inspiration, and guidance. That Rome fascinated them. They referred to Poland as "the Rome of the North," and to themselves as "the Romans of the Vistula," saying with pride "*Civis Romanus sum*." The Roman Senate, the idea of the Roman citizen, the Roman social classes, patricians, equites, plebs, so easily paralleled in the Polish magnates, nobles, and peasants, the Ciceronian orations about citizenship, the Horatian odes to the joys and peace of rural life, these and a hundred other ideas taken from Republican Rome profoundly satisfied and influenced the Pole.

Just where the Polish and Roman resemblances are

copies from a model, and where they are mere social parallelisms, I am not scholar enough to say, but the following list is impressive. Men were received into noble families in Poland just as they were in Rome, by adoption even though there was no blood relationship. Poland had a senate of king's counsellors, a body not unlike the Roman Senate, which body, it is interesting to note, was the subject of Jan Zamoyski's historic study of 1563, *de senatu Romano*. Just ten years later Zamoyski was the chief agent in transferring the electoral privilege from the senate to all the nobles, whence his title through subsequent centuries, "the tribune of the people," a very Roman concept. The Roman colonization policy of spreading their civilization by moving quietly in and occupying relatively vacant land, this also appealed to the Poles; of it the ancients said "Romanus sedendo vincit," "Rome conquers by sitting down," and in just this way and not by war Lithuania, Ruthenia, and the Ukraine were Polonized, not by force.

Poland's citizen army resembled the citizen army of ancient Rome. In Poland, as in Rome, agriculture was basically a form and mode of life, not an agency of commerce or industry and profit. The Pole, like the Roman, took pride in his life and status as a landed proprietor. As in Rome the peasants became attached to the soil, and only when the Roman influence in Poland was highest. As in Rome, so in Poland, senators could not engage in commerce. This Roman idea grew until certain old Polish families claimed direct descent from Romans. You will meet one such in Sienkiewicz's *The Deluge*. One Roman thing the Poles did *not* do. The Romans built roads. Nor did the Poles build bridges

of the Roman type. The parallelisms indeed are more in mental concepts than in material things.

They extend into language and culture, for by the language and culture of Rome the Poles were greatly attracted. Cicero, Horace, Ovid, Livy, Tacitus, were extensively read and became the standard models for poetry and prose writing, orations, panegyrics, history, politics, and drama. Latin, being the language of the Church, of the scholars, of international intercourse, of diplomacy, became the current language of all educated Poles. The first printing press set up in Poland, in Krakow, 1474, printed only Latin. Later the Jesuits taught it in the schools as a living language. The *belles lettres* and all serious books and all documents of those years were all written in Latin.

Thus scores of Latin words were adopted into the Polish language, words in common use today, and Latin grammatical forms and constructions exerted a strong influence upon Polish speech. Many Polish compound words are built on the Latin model, exact translations, cognate ideograms.

From all this it is easy to see the relation ancient Rome bears to the Polish tradition, in the areas of citizenship, conception of the State, legal organization and administration, military policy, mental culture, and linguistic forms and contents; that Poles look back to ancient Rome almost as to a progenitor is not to be wondered at.

### 3. *Germany and the Germans*

We turn now to the place of Germany and the Germans in the Polish tradition, reminding ourselves as we do so that the word "German" occurs neither in the

German nor in the Polish language. For our present purpose the term covers too wide a field. We must think of it as indicating, in the early part of our presentation, the Germanic tribes of the Middle Ages, pressing eastward against the Slav in their eternal *Drang nach Osten* ; later it must mean the Prussians, arising into a national group in East Prussia. Finally, German and Germany refers to the Empire established by Bismarck after 1870 and to post-war Germany. To understand what is going on in Europe today a knowledge of the facts now to be presented is essential.

Every Pole knows that the most important foreign power bearing upon his nation for the last thousand years has been and is the German, that the great and traditional enemy of Poland is Germany. He knows that he has derived certain values from his contact with his western neighbour, but he knows also of the losses, tragedies, and permanent menace to his nation coming from the early Teutons, the Prussians, the German Empire, and the Third Reich. To get the essential facts into brief compass is no easy task, but the paragraphs that now follow are an attempt.

From the thousand years of Polish-German history one tries to select the chief historical facts, and finds them to be at least eight in number ; it would be easy to select eight times eight ; these eight are the irreducible minimum necessary to a grasp of the situation. First: the pressure of Teuton against Slav, pushing him gradually out of the valley of the Elbe and then of the upper and middle reaches of the Oder, partly by extermination, partly by engulfment and absorption, until this advance was stopped about the year A.D. 1000 by the amalgamation

of a number of related Slavic tribes into the Polish State and nation. Second: the assistance of German priests in the conversion of the Polish people and the organization of their Church. Third: the whole Teutonic Knights episode, in which this militant order of monks moved into what is now East Prussia and the district of Culm to convert the heathen Prussians, a task accomplished by exterminating most of them, mixing with some, subjecting the rest, and giving rise to the Prussian people of later centuries. The Knights of this Order pressed hard upon the Poles during their period of national disorganization, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Centuries. Date this period 1226-1466.

The fourth German influence in Polish life comes from the fact that after the devastating and depopulating Tartar invasion of 1241 the towns of southern Poland were rebuilt to a considerable degree by German immigrants brought into Poland by the Polish king. This gave certain Polish towns a large German element in the population and resulted in a number of towns being reconstructed on the German plan, a central market square and a rectangular system of streets extending from it, with gothic walls and gates as the defence system. The German element in the towns was given special weight by the preference of the Pole himself for a rural civilization. These facts helped forward the fifth fact: the influence of the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century. The Polish nobles seized upon this German movement as a means of breaking the domination of the Catholic clergy, of introducing certain reforms, chiefly of an economic and social nature, and of strengthening the power of the secular state. The

Protestant movement brought not only these but also important collateral results, the latter proving the more permanent, as within the century the Poles largely gave up Lutheranism as something German. But the Reformation also brought about the conflict of Lutheran and Catholic, soon to be identified as basically a German-Polish conflict, in popular view to be a Pole implying profession of the Catholic faith.

The sixth epoch of German ascendancy in Polish life was the rule of the two elected Saxon kings, August II and August III, covering the period 1697-1763, known to all Poles as the most dismal decades in their history, both demoralizing and disintegrating, and giving German things no prestige in Polish eyes. The seventh episode is that of the three partitions, 1772, 1793, 1795, brought about at the infamous initiative of Frederick II of Prussia. That this crafty and unprincipled king should by the Germans be called "the Great" has never raised the Polish estimate of German political morals.

The eighth episode in Polish-German relations of which the Pole will never cease to hold bitter memories is the de-Polonizing, de-Catholicizing policy of Bismarck and Bülow, inaugurated soon after 1871 and pursued with ruthless severity until the Great War. Its events and incidents put the final cap-stone on the Polish opinion as to the brutal lengths to which the German would go to attain his ends and created an irradicable element in the Polish tradition of German disregard for human freedom, justice, and the rights of man.

So much for the historic outline. Now let us examine the nature of the influences on Polish life and culture resulting from these ten centuries of contact with



Germans. We begin with town life, the area in which German modes had their largest expression. In the towns the Germans found a useful function as tradesmen, craftsmen, and administrators, and through the exercise of these functions brought German ideas to bear, leaving behind a useful deposit of order, method, system, organization, architecture, tools, and dress, ideas copied in other places nearest the German influence and obviously beneficial. Practice and object naturally found cognate expression in language, so that many German words came into the Polish tongue, Polonized, but of obvious German origin. These words are in the spheres of commercial and industrial life, town administration, and military defence, such words as ratusz for rathaus, buchalter for buchhalter, and rycerz for ritter. The reverse also took place, the Polonization of the Teutons, a fact never ceasing to annoy the Germans, Herr Schaeffer becoming Pan Szefer, Herr Hoffman turning into Pan Dwórzański, and Herr Berlin scarcely being concealed as Pan Berlinski.

Valuable character influence emanated from these Germans; they left a heritage of industry, thoroughness, providence, economy, a love of technical skill, good organization, discipline, and a certain practical approach to the solution of difficulties. Less admired were their pedantry, intolerance, their yielding and submission to the despotism of their own rulers, and their disregard for such spiritual values as liberty and equity. Superior to the Pole in western technique, they considered themselves superior spiritually also, whereas to one looking on from the outside they fall below the Pole in idealism, devotion to spiritual ends, hospitality, courtesy, and taste.

These differences in racial character and temperament result in serious emotional tensions and clashes of opinion. The purely rational and cold-blooded approach of the Prussian to a problem and his choice of appropriate, even though unjust or cruel, means alarms and dismays the less materialistic Pole. The high value the German places upon economic and worldly success and the means he uses to attain them are viewed with contempt by the Pole, somewhat less devoted to material things and more to mind and idea. These are not light matters; they are very serious, and give the Polish-German situation its rather difficult aspect, leading the Pole now to realize that he can defend his land, culture, and rights not by argument and just claim but only by armed force and complete military preparation. This he has made and is ready to use.

The experience of the Pole with the Austrian German, un-Prussianized, was much less dismaying and unhappy. But it was unhappy enough. The Habsburgs were early recognized by the Poles as basically political enemies and the whole experience of the Poles with this house was bad. Maria Theresa was the third party in the partitions and took southern Poland as her portion of the spoils. The Austrians stirred up the peasants of South Poland against their landlords, and created that ethnical fabrication the Ukrainian for purely political purposes, at times, as now, used as a tool against the Poles. But on the whole the Poles had a much better time of it under Austria than under Prussia and no deep hatred of the Austrian remains.

If we seek to summarize all this matter, and ask what is the Polish tradition with regard to Germany, the



To the early 16th-Century Pole Sweden was a northern and distant country, lying beyond a not too pleasant sea, having a different culture from that of Poland, accepting a rival religion, and of no great interest to Poles. Then the daughter of their king and queen became the wife of the Swedish prince, who soon inherited the Swedish throne, John III of the House of Vasa, and in 1587 the son of that union was elected to the Polish throne as Zygmunt III. In 1592 he fell heir to the Swedish throne, and the complications and wars began, for Catholic Zygmunt, very bigoted and a lover of the Jesuits, was an odd fish in the Protestant Swedish waters. Dethroned by Sweden in 1599 he plunged Poland and Sweden into a series of dynastic, religious, and territorial wars which lasted until the Peace of Oliva in 1660, involved the two succeeding Vasa kings of Poland, Wladyslaw IV and Jan Kazimierz, and subjected Poland to the terrible Swedish invasion of 1655-56, described so vividly in Sienkiewicz's *The Deluge*.

From this invasion the Poles retained an impression of the Swedes as "godless, heretics, profaners of churches, robbers of manor-houses, and outragers of the Polish population." A hundred years previous they had thought of the Swedes as mild-mannered eaters of herring, the word for which in Polish lent itself to whimsical rhymes with the Polish word for Sweden. At the court of the Vasas they came to know the Swedes as stolid but capable soldiers, having no great fault beyond their "no good religion." Few Poles had been in Sweden itself. The war of 1655-56 was a terrible introduction to the Swede at his worst. It gave occasion, however, for the arising of one of the most glorious of

Polish traditions, the heroic defence of Czeszochowa, at which the final expulsion of the Swedes had its birth.

But the end of this war did not end Polish-Swedish troubles. The Swedish kings of the Vasa line and then those of the Zweibrücken line all followed the policy of trying to make the Baltic Sea a Swedish lake. This had brought first Gustavus Adolphus, then Charles X, and later other Swedish leaders into Poland at the head of armies, carrying the conflicts of these two countries far into the 18th Century and leaving with the Poles a memory of Sweden seemingly impossible ever to eradicate or alter.

What causes affected the change from the attitude of those days to the high and friendly esteem Poles have for Swedes and their country today? Not one or two, but a long chain of events and tendencies. We shall speak of only a few, but they are important ones. At the court of the last Polish king and in the midst of many distresses the court of Sweden was represented by a minister named Engestrom, still written about by the Poles, Professor Bystron for instance, as a distinguished lover of Poland and things Polish. The turn of sentiment begun by this man was reinforced a few years later when the great Polish hero Tadeusz Kosciuszko was received with distinguished cordiality in Stockholm after his release from the Czar's prison in St. Petersburg. These two things, seemingly so small, had vast emotional significance. Then, after the partitions, Poles began to visit Sweden more frequently, and the realization grew that the Polish-Swedish troubles had been largely due to the dynastic ambitions of self-seeking rulers, and were not at all the basic clashes of peoples.

After Napoleon's marshal, Jean Bernadotte, was elected King of Sweden there soon set in a gradual democratization of that country, bringing Poles and Swedes into a growing political sympathy in an atmosphere very different from that of Prussia, Russia, and Austria, to which countries Sweden, though a monarchy, stood in striking contrast. When the Great War came and Sweden remained outside it as a neutral, the Poles, who perforce fought in all the imperial armies, found no Swedes opposite them in the trenches.

Now, in post-war times and the day of free Poland, the Baltic Sea, the Swedes say, makes Sweden and Poland neighbours, and both lands rejoice in these mutual good relations. Poles and Swedes meeting in Gdynia, where the Swedish flags outnumber all other foreign flags, experience a growing respect for each other and often a positive liking. Politically Sweden has an orientation not unlike Poland, fearing the same dictatorships, Germany and Russia, though of course to a lesser degree. Poland's growing Baltic trade borne in its own ships increases the commerce between Poland and Sweden and on terms satisfactory to each. Thus through the development of the past one hundred and fifty years the stern hatreds of the 17th Century have turned into the deep friendships of today, and when one now thinks of the Polish tradition as regards Sweden it is the tradition of the present which is dominant in his mind.

##### 5. *Russia*

It is one of history's truly sad facts that the two great Slavic nations, the Poles and the Russians, should have

been cast in roles of constant conflict. With Peter the Great, in the early 18th Century, Russia became the more powerful of the two, and with Catherine the Great, and partly due to her, the tragic partitions of Poland were consummated. The Poles were then ushered into their many decades of cruel and bitter experience of Russians, and the Polish tradition as to Russia became permanently coloured with the memories and stories of those awful years which ended only with the Polish defeat of the Bolsheviks in 1920.

Before the partitions the Poles thought of the Russians as representing a lower culture, a crude orientalism, a thin veneer of European civilization, and a system full of cruelty and tyranny. The officials sent by Russia to Poland as its rulers were so brutal, corrupt, dishonest, and unjust that to most Poles that official is the typical Russian, the Russian of his experience. The persecutions, expropriations, and deportations which followed the Polish attempts to regain their lost liberties added no glory to the Russian name. All these events came to their terrific climax in the unspeakable Bolshevik revolution, of which no people know more than the Poles, several million of them having passed through it. Finally, the Bolshevik invasion with its innumerable horrors. No long section is needed to state the Polish tradition as to Russia.

However, two important points should be noted or our picture will be far out of focus. First, the surprising lack of resentment with which the Pole views the individual Russian. He seems to reason that it was the various Russian governments that caused Poland its historic sorrows, not the Russian people as such. The

second point is the Polish reflection that after all the Russians are Slavs, that many of them are delightful people, and that in time Poles and Russians will be able to adjust themselves satisfactorily to each other.

#### 6. *Turks and Tartars*

As we have seen, two powerful Oriental nations, the Turks and the Tartars, came into frequent contact with the Poles. But these contacts were not by any means all military and warlike; they were also mercantile and cultural. Covering as they did a period of five centuries, the 13th through the 17th, that being the era of their greatest intensity, they exerted a significant influence upon the civilization of Poland, and not all of it destructive. Though the Turks and Tartars were the chief elements in these influences, place must also be given to the part of several other eastern groups, the Armenians, Ruthenians, and the Wallachians, the Muscovites, and the Hungarians. The cultural side of these relationships produced in the Poles an oriental love of splendour and luxury and a taste for eastern things. Professor Stanislaw Kot collects some of the expressions of this oriental tendency in his *The Golden Age of Poland*. When the rich Polish magnate Jan Ostrorog was in Italy in 1467 the Polish costumes of his hundred companions and retainers startled the Italians with their almost barbaric splendour. They wore the long Polish robe-like outer garments, "resplendent with gold and silver and other riches"; long curls fell over their broad shoulders; jewels glittered in their caps. When Jan's son Stanislaw visited Rome in 1513 he was referred to as "all gold and gems in the barbaric manner"; when



he went to his audience with the Pope, he was "all in gold, with a double chain and a quantity of jewels, especially on his cap." The Poles who went to Naples to meet Bona and conduct her to Poland as the wife of Zygmunt I "appeared as if weighted down with gold and gems." At Vienna in 1515 the Polish delegation to the Congress again gave a demonstration of their wealth and oriental taste. An Italian observer spoke of their magnificent furs, plumed caps, costly pins, knots, belts, gold and silver buckles in relief with Tartar jewels, robes of gold brocade with wide borders, heavy gold chains and gleaming precious stones.

Not all Poles approved of this elegance and orientalism. The priest and historian Jan Długosz writes of this "decadence" in 1466, complains of the "Eastern manner," and condemns it heartily. We find more of this in a sermon of 1475. There are other records of oriental customs, such as the king sending a brocaded robe to a Venetian ambassador to wear when he was to appear before him in audience. Kot says it is hard to make generalizations as to the extent of this influence of the East, but that it is clear that Poland was susceptible to it, and that it would have gone deeper if the return to the West and to the Latin world had not come when it did in the 16th Century.

Gathering all these matters together, war, commerce, and culture, one seeks for their permanent traces upon the Polish mind and tradition. On the material side, an appreciation of oriental rugs, textiles, arms, and other eastern objects of art, no old Polish home being without them where the means were available. On the psychological side, a trace of an oriental attitude toward time,

organization, and order, happily giving way before the demands of the 19th and 20th Centuries. In national memory, a tradition of swift and cruel invasions, the burning of villages, towns, churches, manor-houses, and castles. In racial opinion, a true regard for the better values of the Turk and Tartar, the cultural side of the former, the dash, courage, and, when civilized, the honesty, stability, and industry of the latter. I have no few times heard the unmovable devotion of this or that man attributed to his Tartar ancestry. A strain of Tartar blood is esteemed, not concealed.

Politically, both Turk and Tartar were at times Polish allies. They were convenient partisans in the rear or on the flank of Austria or Muscovy when these Powers were plotting adventures against Poland, and after the partitions, Turkey was the one great Power which did not recognize them, a fact the Poles have never forgotten.

### 7. *Hungary*

It so happens that I come to the writing of this section on the place of Hungary in the Polish tradition only a couple of days after the regaining by Hungary of a common frontier with Poland at the crests of the Carpathian Mountains, a geographical relationship which obtained from about 1015 until 1772 but which was only the territorial symbol of a much deeper fact. In the realm of the mind Poland and Hungary have had a common frontier in unbroken continuity from 1015 until today.

The bases of the deep traditional sympathy between Poland and Hungary are of two kinds, the first group social and cultural, the second political and historical.

In the social and cultural group are such facts as their common mode of life as a landed gentry; their common costume for a century or more, the Poles adopting the Hungarian dress chiefly after Stefan Batory became king in 1576; the Polish use of a household functionary called a hajduk, his title, costume, and duties all being taken over from Hungary; the popularity of Hungarian wine in Poland, "in Hungaria natum, in Polonia educatum," or, as they often said, "born in Hungary and educated in the wine-cellars of Krakow"; study in each other's universities and exchange of goods; the adoption into the Polish language of numerous words, such as kontusz, a long coat revealing fancy sleeves, dobosz, meaning drummer, and orszak, retinue. Both nations loved oratory, Latin and Latinisms, and the gentry of each nation cultivated social graces and fine manners. Perhaps here we may include military matters; the nations were alike in their use of highly skilled cavalry, and after Batory became king of Poland, Poland used the Hungarian infantry formations, a new departure in Polish warfare.

Turning to political life, the Poles and Hungarians had a common fear of Germany and dislike of that people, and a common enemy in the Turk, with, on the Polish side, the exceptions previously noted. They also had other political problems in common. But it is chiefly in their ruling houses that Poland and Hungary had mutual political interests. Charles I of the House of Anjou, 1308-43, King of Hungary, married Elizabeth, the sister of Kazimierz the Great, as a result of which their son Louis the Great became king both of Hungary and of Poland. Upon the throne of Poland Louis was

succeeded by his daughter Jadwiga, whose marriage to Jagiello, Grand Duke of Lithuania, brought about the union of Poland and Lithuania.

In 1440 the Hungarians offered their crown to Wladyslaw III of Poland and he reigned five years, giving his life in 1444 at Varna leading his combined Polish and Hungarian forces in a crusade against the Turks. Forty-six years later another Wladyslaw of the Polish House of Jagiello was elected king of Hungary, to rule until 1516.

After the Jagiellon line of kings of Poland died out in 1572 the Poles elected a series of foreign kings, the second of which, Stefan Batory, reigning from 1576 to 1586 and by most Poles considered to have been their greatest king, was a Hungarian, a prince of Transylvania. One of the saddest facts in the first eight centuries of Polish history was the brevity of his rule. The dignity of his person and the magnitude of his achievements might almost be said to have given origin in Poland to a permanent sentiment in favour of Hungary.

For the next great event uniting Poles and Hungarians we have to skip far down the years to 1849, when General Bem, a Pole, was given command of the Hungarian forces revolting against the Habsburg Austrian rule. The most recent of these strong bonds was forged when, in 1920, the Hungarians were the only people to send and deliver military supplies to aid the Poles in their war to repel the Bolshevik invasion, an unforgettable service. And now, in March 1939, the age-long common frontier of Poland with Hungary has been restored. As the soldiers meet at the border, each in the other's tongue Pole and Hungarian cry "Long live Hungary!"

"Long live Poland!" An ancient tradition evidenced in a new event.

### 8. *England*

Before me, the author's name not signed, is an extraordinarily interesting study called "Ten Centuries of Anglo-Polish Cultural Relations." It supplies something of the background we need against which to see the Polish tradition as to England and the influence England has had upon the Polish tradition as a whole. Among the many relevant facts cited are these: England's King Canute had a Polish mother, to which circumstance Hilaire Belloc attributes the fact that "though still something of a barbarian" he was "of greater intelligence than the rest." She was the daughter of Poland's first great leader, Mieczyslaw I, who died in A.D. 992. We learn that later the Polish Piast kings were in contact with the Plantagenets, the Jagiellons with the Tudors, the Vasas and Jan Sobieski with the Stuarts. Jan Laski, famous in England during the Reformation, was a Pole. Poland's King Zygmunt August corresponded with Queen Elizabeth. Charles I had Polish contacts. Bonnie Prince Charlie had a Polish mother, grand-daughter of King Jan Sobieski.

Numerous English and Scottish soldiers and traders, 17,000, it is estimated, followed their respective callings in the Poland of the 16th Century. Poland had extensive commercial relations with England, through Danzig. Stanislaw August, Poland's last king, visited England and spoke English, trying his hand at translating Shakespeare. Burke discussed the Polish constitution of May 3, 1791. Fox was Kosciuszko's friend. And so

on down the years to the present, when both Marshal Pilsudski and President Moscicki enjoyed English hospitality before the war when they were seeking to escape Russian repression. Here Joseph Conrad comes in, Pole of the Poles, and England's distinguished anthropologist, Professor Bronislaw Malinowski. The catalogue is long and impressive.

From all these contacts what impression have the Poles of the English? That they are the empire builders of the modern world; a people also of keen commercial instincts; creators in literature and drama; democrats in government; determined fighters, slow to start fighting but equally unready to quit; lovers of sport and the outdoors; restless travellers; solid citizens; a nation of honour. There are two distinctively English concepts which impress the modern Pole, the amateur sportsman with his high code of sportsmanship, almost a phase of national ethics, and the English conception of a gentleman, so concrete and useful an idea and so appealing to the Pole that, though he has his own ancient code as a knight and man of social grace and personal honour, he has adopted into his national ideal both the word and the idea, gentleman, in Polish orthography, *dzentelman*.

#### 9. *America*

That there are nearly five million Americans of Polish ancestry is both cause and effect of the Polish tradition of that country. In its time the discovery of America profoundly impressed the Poles, they to this day using that historic event as the measure of a man's courage and initiative. Of a man lacking these qualities and

related ones they say quietly, "He'll never discover America." In the days of 1776, two of the greatest soldiers in the American Army were Poles, the engineer, General Tadeusz Kosciuszko, and the organizer of the American cavalry, General Count Kazimierz Pulaski, who gave his life for America in 1779 at Savannah. Many other Poles have played a part in American life, and today the Poles of Poland are proud of that fact. Their recent memory of America is this, that there Paderewski aroused the public to an understanding of the Polish situation, leading up to President Wilson's famous 13th of his 14 points calling for a free Poland with access to the sea over its own territory. The Poles remember that in their hard post-war struggle it was America which was their one disinterested friend on a grand scale, pouring millions of dollars into Polish assistance and relief through the Hoover Mission, the Red Cross, the Society of Friends, the Y.M.C.A., and the Joint Distribution Committee. These are ineradicable memories, a permanent element in the tradition of America.

As to those aspects of American life which appeal to the Poles, one mentions their vision of America as a land of golden opportunity, of system, order, efficiency, science, technique, invention, conveniences, and of progress. To put through a big project quickly is to do it "at American tempo." They somewhat fear the element of materialism in America, but remember their own vivid experience of practical American idealism of giving without asking for anything in return. The new Poland abounds in parks, streets, and monuments dedicated to America and Americans, and in organiza-

tions and institutions built on American models. There is an annual exchange of students between the two republics, and through translations a wide reading of American books. I have travelled far and wide and know no land where it is so pleasant to be an American as in Poland.



## SUMMARY

This, then, a man varying not very far from this well-established national tradition, is what one may reasonably expect a representative Pole to be like. Racially, he is proud of his Slavic blood and characteristics, knows he has for long, long centuries been at home on his ancestral native soil, and rejoices in his western Latin orientation.

Personally, he is as a rule somewhat individualistic, an idealist, a man tolerant of the views of other men, basically religious and deeply committed to the Catholic faith but rarely really pious, a romantic and at times impractical, intelligent and of quick perceptions with a taste for intellectual interests, and fond of the rural life, the land, and the out-of-doors.

Socially, though recognizing inherited class distinctions, he is friendly across class lines, courteous, chivalrous, hospitable, a good diner, and intensely devoted to his family or at least very conscious of the duties imposed upon him by family ties.

Politically, his individualism makes somewhat against national cohesion, but also makes him not easily drilled and regimented; he is a convinced believer in democratic government and the democratic process as a whole, is a brave and able soldier passionately devoted to freedom, to his army as a means of defence but not as an instrument of aggression, and feels that his nation has a historic mission in Europe. He has a set of attitudes

toward other nations growing naturally out of his own nation's historic experience with them, along the lines indicated in the last chapter.

These traditions, to which, to be sure, not all are always loyal, are, on the whole, not merely an inheritance of ideas, but vital and operative forces determining individual and collective action. They also serve an important assimilative and unifying function in the life of the State. A knowledge of these traditions is a key to the understanding of the Pole's personal and national decisions and actions.







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